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And the great star early droop'd in the western sky
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The Repudiation of Stalinism — RICHARD LOWENTHAL

Notes on the Russian Turn — IRVING HOWE

SUMMER 1956 — 75c

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THE YOUNG

"A *Cup of Coffee and a Seat*"—a Special Report on Negro Student Action in the South by Michael Walzer, plus articles on the Beatniks, the Beatniks, the Teenagers, the Politics of the Campus, and:

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Reviews *Miscellany* *Letters*

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Revolution in Eastern Europe

TO THE HUNGARIAN PEOPLE WHO DARED

DISSENT

CUBA

THE INVASION AND THE CONSEQUENCES

by MICHAEL WALZER

What happened in Cuba was not a failure of military technique nor even of political intelligence. Nor was it merely—as some liberals have seemed to suggest—the product of the distorted world view of our secret agents, uncontrolled for the moment by diplomats or professors. The fiasco on the beach of the Bay of Pigs was the dismal culmination of a hundred years of American colonialism in the Latin countries. It need not have been

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(continued on page 5)

a first hand report by *Marshall Sahlins* **THE DESTRUCTION OF CONSCIENCE IN VIETNAM**

PROTEST

Opinions and Proposals on Strategies of Opposition: Kenneth Boulding, Michael Walzer, Tom Kahn, others

POLITICS

Emanuel Geltman and Stanley Plastrik on Coalition, Tom Hayden on "The Movement"

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Irving Howe

THE FIRST 35 YEARS WERE THE HARDEST

In which a Founding Editor of Dissent *Submits to an Imaginary Interviewer, Answering Questions He Likes to Hear—and Some He Would as Soon Not*

Q: How do you explain that *Dissent* has survived for so long?

A: True grit.

Q: That's all?

A: Also the generosity of a few friends and the self-taxation of our editors.

Q: In a book about the McCarthy period Victor Navasky praises *Dissent* for its intransigent opposition to McCarthyism—I almost get the impression that you fellows did something heroic in those days. How did it feel in the 1950s to be attacking McCarthyism at a time when a lot of others were taking cover?

A: It felt fine; but really, we had no sense of doing anything especially notable; it just seemed like an elementary obligation. Nice of Vic to say a good word for us (considering the press we get in his magazine the *Nation*), but I suspect that behind it all is his desire to advance a somewhat melodramatic view of the 1950s, and therefore he casts a pleasant glow over the opponents of McCarthy.

Q: But wait, I've heard old-timers speak about those days as if fascism were only a step away.

A: There were Fascists, there always are. There was repression and intimidation. It was a rotten time—ugly. But not fascism. Even the Communists, harassed as they were, remained a legal party and issued a legal press. A few old-fashioned Marxists, their imaginations strained by analogies with Europe, started "going underground." But you have to distinguish between legislative thuggery and a Fascist takeover.

Q: OK, let's get back to the time when you started. Some of your first editors had come out of Marxist groups, while others were free-lance radicals. What were you hoping to achieve with *Dissent?*

A: In a sense, just to keep body and soul together. We weren't even sure we could last beyond the first year (and now we don't seem to know how to stop—not that we want to!). Those of us who came out of the Marxist milieu wanted to break from sect life completely, which also led in a few years to a gradual abandonment of Marxism as a system, something that may be regarded as an intellectual equivalent of sect life. As for the free-lance radicals, they wanted a home where they could discuss and write. Things were very rough on the left. Organizations were breaking up, morale was low. But somehow we stuck it out and the magazine grew. Or at least, it grew on us.

Q: Now wait a minute, you're being just a little too casual about Marxism. In your younger years some of you were Trotskyists or other sorts of anti-Stalinist leftists. So think: Did you start *Dissent* in order to move away from orthodox Marxism or did you move away because you had started *Dissent?*

A: Who can be sure? You talk as if people entirely understand their own behavior, or as if the passage of time necessarily makes them wise. I'd say this: Since we had to respond to events every three months, we began to realize that as a politics Marxism just wasn't holding up. The working class was not the lever of revolutionary change; the vexing problem of Stalinism could not be usefully approached through traditional Marxist categories; the choice before humanity could not be reduced to capitalism or socialism; and the Marxist theory of crisis had, at the least, to be modified. And although we didn't join the anti-Marxist stampede of those

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years, we could no longer cling to Marxism as a unified system that supposedly coped with all the major problems of politics and society. Still, it would be silly to deny that Marxism has left its mark on all of us, as it has on most reflective people.

Q: But didn't you pay a price for this? Some younger people, including survivors of the New Left, still say that your harsh anti-Stalinism contributed, perhaps inadvertently, to discrediting leftist ideas these past few years?

A: *It was the Gulag that helped discredit leftist ideas, not the handful of us on the left who told the truth about the Gulag.* One of the damaging realities of the past few decades has been the virtual concord (a pact across ideology) by which the conservative right and the pro-Stalinist "left" jointly identify the Soviet dictatorship with "socialism." As long as people accept that, naturally they won't want socialism. Why should they? I'm not saying all the troubles of the left were caused by Stalinism—only that a great many were. Remember: Millions of good people were burned out, disenchanted, destroyed by Stalinism—whole generations. And the costs are still being measured.

Q: Let's turn to something else, maybe almost as touchy. How do you explain the fact that whichever way the political wind blows it seems always to blow past you folks—that is, both during the turns to the right and the turns to the left?

A: That's a tough question, but I'll try to confront it. In general, I'd say that this century has been a time of violence, extremism, authoritarian delusions; a time in which liberal socialists or socialist liberals aren't likely to flourish, though in Europe there have been some good intervals. Still, what chance did European voices of intelligence and reason have during the decades between wars? As for America, there's something about our culture—a strong inclination toward simplistic postures of rectitude and moralizing that come down from Protestantism and through the Emersonian tradition. These have value in themselves yet also militate against a politics of reform. So when we do have a left in this country, it tends to run toward moralistic extremes and then, as in the late sixties, to self-destruct.

Q: One more question about the time of your founding. In the 1950s the *Dissent* group was, naturally enough, concerned with the matter of totalitarianism. Now, in retrospect and bearing in mind the recent Gorbachev changes, do you think the theories of totalitarianism advanced in the 1950s, theories you more or less subscribed to, were correct?

A: You won't think me evasive if I say yes and no? In those years, as we took in the meaning of the Holocaust, as the Stalin regime consolidated its power in Eastern Europe, and as the possibility of communist victories in France and Italy seemed quite real, it was only natural that a mood of depression should sweep across us. One totalitarian monster destroyed, another takes its place.

The keenest analysts of totalitarianism—Hannah Arendt, Richard Lowenthal, Franz Neumann—naturally focused on whatever seemed novel in the totalitarian upsurge: terror as an integral part of their movement and their exercise of power; ideology as the mental equivalent of terror; "permanent mobilization" in the struggle against "enemies" real and imagined; the atomization of society and the destruction of social groups, movements, publics. The ultimate end of totalitarianism, if there was one, appeared as either world domination or apocalypse—or both.

Arendt performed a real service by stressing these elements and by insisting, as had become obvious to anyone except the Marxist faithful, that totalitarianism was not merely an extension of monopoly capitalism. What made totalitarianism so powerful and frightening was precisely the embodiment of a radical new ethos of blood and terror.

Q: What, then, went wrong with this theory?

A: What went wrong was something that goes wrong with most theories—the impulse to transform a historically limited observation, no matter how acute, into a timeless universal. There was an implicit assumption that totalitarian society had achieved a mode of stasis, which, in a sense, meant an end to history. The overriding value of the theory was that it forced attention upon what was historically unprecedented in the Hitler and Stalin regimes—as against lazy theorists who kept telling us "there have always been dictatorships" and repression. What the theorists of totalitarianism offered us was not so much a complete understanding—how could they?—as a remarkably vivid description and evocation of a novel experience that had shattered the modern world.

Soon the flaws in this approach became clear: Terror can't be maintained indefinitely; history didn't come to an end, it just dragged on.

Q: But didn't Isaac Deutscher, the Marxist with whom you had some sharp quarrels, see better than Arendt, Lowenthal, and the rest?

A: Again, no and yes. With his stress on economic determinism, Deutscher lent a certain aura of necessity to Stalinism. He was wrong in assuming that because it had a "planned economy" (it might better be called an "ill-planned economy"), the Soviet Union was certain to create the material basis

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for liberalization. Today it seems the other way round: It is the crisis of the Soviet economy that has stimulated the movement to *glasnost*. But we must grant that Deutscher was correct in stressing the inescapability of historical change. "It would be a striking mistake," he wrote, "to treat totalitarianism metaphysically as a state of society's utter immobility, or of history's absolute freezing, which exclude any political movement in the form of action from below or reform from above." On this our old friend and antagonist was right. Credit where credit is due.

Q: Which leads of course to Gorbachev. How, in terms of political theory, would you characterize his regime?

A: I'm in no hurry to paste a label on *glasnost-perestroika,* having had more than my share of embarrassments over premature categorizations. Let's wait and see. I'd just add that those who say the Soviet Union is going back to capitalism are foolish, though no more so than those who still call it socialist. Let's say it's a bureaucratic collectivist society in a state of extreme crisis, with strong tendencies toward a modernization that entail an as-yet-unsettled quantity of partial democratization. But it is not a democracy either. So I've done just what I said should not be done. And how much help are these labels?

The recent developments in the Soviet Union are the most important, indeed remarkable, since the Second World War. There are sectarians of the extreme left and extreme right, more concerned with clinging to their theories than with responding to realities, who minimize the importance of these events. I think these events are astonishing and offer hope. We have, as Lew Coser writes in this issue, finally gotten out of the era in which the Communist parties of Europe represented a significant force; we can look forward to a moment when a socialist left in Europe and elsewhere doesn't have to carry the burden of being (mis)identified with communism. And the events in the Soviet Union themselves show a culture, an intelligentsia rising out of decades of enforced silence and falsehood, springing to passionate life and speaking with remarkable candor. When I read the collection of Soviet press excerpts that Josephine Woll put together in our last issue, I found myself exhilarated. To have lived to the time when Orwell's *1984* is published in the Soviet Union, when people there write about Koestler's *Darkness at Noon*—you think, maybe the struggle of the anti-Stalinist left wasn't wasted, after all.

Q: Yes, but how does this affect your hopes for a socialist revival? Is the consequence of Gorbachev's policies entirely positive?

A: Few things have entirely positive consequences. The immediate political-strategic effects of Gorbachev's policies are good. There is a visible winding down of the cold war. There is a beginning of withdrawal by the big powers from small countries they've occupied or "liberated." There are signs of a modest economic linkage between Eastern and Western Europe. All to the good. But the ideological consequences are, for the time being, not so good. Insofar as a few on the left and many on the right further the notion that Soviet society is "socialist," the result is clearly a major shift among both intellectuals and the general public toward favoring a "free-market" or procapitalist outlook. In some Eastern European countries there are intellectuals who, rather naively, celebrate the "free market" without recognizing sufficiently that (a) it has really been constrained in the West by many governmental and social interventions and (b) there are grave disadvantages, ranging from unemployment to environmental devastation, that result from "free-market" economies. Still, right now the bourgeois democracies look pretty good when compared to the faltering communist system, and in consequence the idea of capitalism has taken on a sheen of attractiveness among people in both East and West such as it hasn't had for a long time.

Q: A temporary phenomenon?

A: Hard to say. Let there be a major recession in the West and ideological sentiments could change radically. Let Gorbachev achieve even a few economic successes and people might suddenly discover some merit even in the Soviet system. In the age of mass media, shifts of attitude occur much more quickly and unexpectedly than in the past.

Q: Still, you can hardly deny that socialism as an idea is, these days, in some disarray; that the social democratic parties, even when still strong electorally, have mainly a symbolic or verbal relation to the original socialist commitment; that even lifelong socialists have difficulty in providing a clear, simple description of what they want, that . . .

A: I get it. You don't really suppose you're the first to fire such questions? It would be feckless in a brief conversation to pretend to offer full answers. I've written a book on this, Michael Harrington has just completed an important book on the same theme, and there's the classic study of Alec Nove, *The Economics of Feasible Socialism*. Still, it would be self-deceiving to say that socialism as an idea and a politics is now in great shape. It isn't. We continue to suffer the repercussions of the failures and disasters of our century. Once a great movement experiences such traumas, it takes a long time before it can regain clarity of thought and confidence.

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But if you look at the decades since World War II there have been some very good intervals for the socialist movement, especially in England, Germany, and Scandinavia. Important strides forward were taken toward strengthening the welfare state, a modification of capitalism that, while not yet socialism, has significantly improved the lives of millions of people. The welfare state doesn't stir the imagination of apocalypse or violent extremism, but it is part of that steady process of social transition, a sort of "long march" in and through democracy that is central to the socialist project.

Q: Well, sure, it's easy for you chaps to polish your rhetoric, to say you want a society of solidarity, etc., but I don't see that you're very much nearer to reaching your ultimate goal than your movement was some decades ago?

A: Fair enough, or almost fair. It's true that for some time now we socialists have been on the defensive, but I think we've gained something thereby. We have a far more sophisticated sense of what socioeconomic change means and how difficult and lengthy the process is likely to be. We have firmed up our principled commitment to democracy and thereby abandoned entirely some of the more ambiguous aspects of the Marxist past. (Incidentally, one can see some signs of this in even the "leftist" pages of the British journal *New Left Review:* pleasing signs of heresy.) The European socialist and social democratic parties sometimes thrive, sometimes flounder; they hardly have the animating fire of earlier days; but there are good and serious people within them, for whom socialism remains a significant option. In any case, consider the other main political trends, liberalism and conservatism: Are they in such great shape?

Q: Sorry, that won't do. That others are in trouble hardly makes your situation better.

A: Well, wait. Politics isn't a zero-sum game, at least democratic politics isn't. It's a regulated conflict for influence and power. The capacity and aliveness of one political tendency is measured in relation to another. The neocons are rapidly going into eclipse now that Reagan's gone. Liberalism? In France it's having a revival, partly because the French intellectuals, avant gardists all, are never more than fifty years behind everyone else. But in America liberalism is in bad shape, not only as a movement but also as a current of thought. American liberalism has almost nothing to say about the terrible problem of the underclass. American liberalism is all but helpless before the growth of multinational corporate power, the increasing tendency of modern society toward international economic concentration, and the consequent extent to which vast corporate units dominate political life. About this we socialists may not have the last word either, but at least we point to the urgency of the problem. American liberals, fearful of being smeared with the "S" word, hesitate to challenge even conceptually the existing property relations.

Q: You socialists have this curious habit of always looking toward the future. But what is the future except a continuous flow of the present?

A: Very eloquent. But we don't only dream utopian dreams, we also engage with current problems. On some things we have answers close to those of the liberals and we cooperate with them. On other things, we point, so to say, beyond liberalism.

Q: So you really want to tell me that in this rather cynical time you people propose to continue?

A: Yes. I need only walk the streets of New York to be persuaded once more that our socioeconomic system is cruel, unjust. On the one hand, Drexel Burnham and all those *goniffs* on Wall Street—the obscene displays of greed, the replays of the Robber Barons, the reckless and mindless speculations. On the other side, thousands of people freezing in the streets. Or I read the statistics that Mark Levinson has brought together in this issue, figures that show how in Reagan's America the rich got richer and the poor, poorer. Problems multiply, injustices grow more glaring—this is no time for men and women of conscience to give up! Or I read about those splendid women in the Black Sash movement of South Africa who go out into the streets to fight apartheid, or I talk with my friends of Peace Now in Israel: Why, our difficulties here are trivial by comparison.

As for *Dissent,* we're always in need of money, always searching for new contributions. But there's good news too. Tell me, do you know of any other enterprise like ours, based entirely on voluntary participation, which has lasted for thirty-five years? And as some of us get older or sick or tired, there's a whole new generation of talented and devoted people coming along.

We believe the current economic relationships of power are bad. We believe they undermine democracy. We believe there can be more humane social arrangements, more democratic and equitable modes of structuring an economy. If our flame springs high, then good; if it flickers, then we tend it so that, with patience and time, it will flare again. □

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H. Brand

MERGER MANIA AND ECONOMIC DECLINE

The "leveraged buyout," dramatized last fall by the struggle over RJR Nabisco and the $25 billion paid by a Wall Street firm mostly through debt instruments, has been only part of the wave of mergers and acquisitions, by far the largest in American economic history, that began in 1981. This wave has been linked to an increase in corporate debt unprecedented in volume. In terms of the constant-dollar value of assets (represented by shares of stock) acquired from target firms, this wave has been twice as great as the merger booms of 1965–70 and 1898–1901.[1] During the eighties nonfinancial corporate debt grew at a rate roughly half again as much as the national product (growth in the national product serves as a crude indicator of debt-servicing ability). True, the rise in corporate debt has not impaired the value of corporate assets as expressed in the price of shares. Much of that rise, however, has been applied to buying back shares by the issuing firms, so that their higher values are due wholly or in part to their relative scarcity rather than to a genuine appreciation in underlying (real) assets and potential yield.

A firm can finance the acquisition of another (or target) firm either by an exchange of shares or cash. It can raise the cash through banks or other investors. But how much is the target firm worth? That is partly determined by the price of its shares in the stock market. However, the acquiring investors may believe that Wall Street is undervaluing these shares, and so may the shareholders of the target firm. A premium over the shares' market value will therefore be offered or demanded. How high this premium will go depends upon the estimated worth of the target firm's productive assets, and must largely be judged a matter of speculation on the part of the bidders.

At RJR Nabisco, a large food and cigarette manufacturer and itself the product of an earlier merger of two mammoth firms, the incumbent management sought to "buy out" the firm's shareholders. It offered to pay a premium over the market-traded value of the shares. It was outbid, however, by the Wall Street firm which eventually became the new owner, and whose offer to shareholders doubled the shares' aggregate value to nearly $25 billion. More than half of this sum was financed by banks (such as Bankers Trust and Chase Manhattan), and the other half by financial houses such as Merrill Lynch. The buying firm itself funded only around 8 percent of the purchase price from capital of its own. The other 92 percent represented the "leverage" by which it purchased RJR Nabisco. Parenthetically, it might be noted that the banks often sell the loans to nonbank investors, thereby reducing their own risk. They also earn enormous fees, estimated for the RJR buyout at $400 million, and shared by some two hundred participating banks.

What does the enormous merger wave of the eighties signify? I will here offer a few sketchy answers. I will discuss the source of the gains that accrue to shareholders of target companies as well as to acquiring investors. We will find that these gains must be attributed essentially to the actual and potential market power of the merged firms. Such accretions in market power are fostered by permissive antitrust policies that have been part of the deregulatory climate of the late seventies and eighties. Those accretions of market power are usually twinned with a consolidation of industrial capacity and signify economic contraction. Also, I will briefly explore the institutional environment that has facilitated the merger wave.

The rapid growth of pension funds of Wall Street players has been crucial in debt-financing the merger wave. And then there is the emergence of the Federal Reserve Board as active lender of last resort over the past two decades or so, as well as the continuing efforts by federal government agencies to "bail out" savings and loan banks, all in turn promoted by the deregulatory climate and the laxity in supervision to which it has led. Finally, I will point to the reactionary redistributive effects that the combination of unfettered financial dealings and permissive antitrust and banking policies are having and the damage they inflict upon a democratic polity.

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Who Profits, Who Loses?

The rationale of such transactions as the RJR Nabisco leveraged buyout or acquisition (the two terms are used interchangeably, although not all acquisitions are leveraged buyouts) is to realize gains from the value potential that inheres not merely in the productive plant but in the market power of the "target" firm. A business embodies a network of personnel, supplier, and customer relations, of government, banking, and investor connections, as well as physical plant. A corporate takeover often disrupts this network, and can make for losses as well as gains, financiers being usually ignorant of or indifferent to the social setting of the business. I cannot here deal with this aspect of takeovers (e.g., the talk of differences in management "cultures" when firms experience postmerger difficulties). The value gains are of course expected to exceed the premiums paid to shareholders of "target" companies—an expectation that may at times be disappointed. Despite this possibility, between 1981 and 1986 premiums in the aggregate totaled an estimated $200 billion over and above the trading value of holdings at the time of the takeover. And the market value of the shares of corporations thus "restructured" rose by about 50 percent over the period, thus contributing to the overall increase in share prices, boosted also by the plant retirements mentioned above. Where do the potential value gains come from?

The value gain must of course be judged by the bidder to run well in excess of the heavy burden of interest charges, estimated to range from 20 to 33 percent of the acquired firm's cash flow (after-tax profit plus depreciation set-asides), as well as to be sufficiently robust to absorb the pressures for quick repayment of the loans needed for the acquisition.

One influential theory has been propounded by Michael Jensen, a professor at the Harvard Business School.[2] Jensen holds that an important potential gain to shareholders is "free" cash flow, that is, the cash flow that remains after a firm's projects have been funded that over time yield a reasonable rate of return after accounting for the costs of capital. Why should there be a remnant of cash flow, here termed "free"? Because, says Jensen, "Managers have incentives to expand their firms beyond the size that maximizes shareholder wealth," that is, for bureaucratic or self-aggrandizing reasons, managers tend to overinvest. The investor acquiring such firms would liquidate such overinvestment. The "free" cash flow "must be paid out to shareholders if the firm is to be efficient and to maximize value for shareholders." Such a payout of course "reduces the resources under managers' control." It also subjects them to the monitoring of the capital markets, since now being unable to finance projects from internally generated funds, they must turn to those markets instead.

It is a bit puzzling why the cretinism of capital markets with their unvarying focus on short-term financial results should be relied on to substitute for managers' competence in judging the need for a given project. But it follows from the conventional postulate (to which Jensen evidently adheres) that shareholders' interests diverge from those of managers (their presumed agents). Whatever the extent of the divergence, however, it is greatly mitigated by the often extensive shareholdings held by the managers. Yet the postulate about the discipline of the capital markets is necessary for Jensen in order to bolster his point.

How then is "free" cash flow determined? It is roughly equivalent to the "unused" borrowing power of the firm. (If your monthly home mortgage payment is equivalent to, say, 15 percent of your income, then your "unused" borrowing power represents an additional 10 percent of your income, on the assumption that, optimally, mortgage payments can take one-quarter of your income.) The unused borrowing power of a "target" firm (or of a firm retiring part or all of its publicly traded shares) "justifies," in the case of buyouts, the premium over the market value of its shares paid by the acquirer to the shareholders. Thus, the premium captures the "free" cash flow for the "target" firm's shareholders. The debt incurred by the acquirer and the usually burdensome interest charges serve as disciplinary restraints: he is compelled to operate the acquired or the now merged firm as efficiently as possible; he cannot afford "wasteful" expenditures. Of course, speculative gains, if any, remain his alone, and among steps he can and usually will take is the sale of divisions of the acquired firm (divestiture). Jensen's theory possesses explanatory force but rests on premises not explicitly acknowledged by him (to be noted below).

The efficiency gains from corporate "restructuring" carried by debt have often come at great cost to employees and communities. Jensen recognizes only an obligation to shareholders in such restructuring. Nor is his position exceptional. *Business Week* senior writer Judith Dobrzynski has the following to say regarding the RJR Nabisco buyout:

> Should directors consider the interests of employees, communities and other so-called stakeholders? Only to break a tie. The RJR directors favored KKR [Kohlberg, Kravis, Roberts & Co., the Wall Street firm that outbid RJR Nabisco management in the leveraged buyout offer]

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> because they believed the firm would treat employees better and dismantle less of RJR. Those are valid concerns. But outside directors work first and foremost for shareholders. When managers start talking about having to balance the concerns of all stakeholders, hold on to your wallet. That's often a smokescreen used to justify decisions to entrench them or enhance their positions. The RJR directors' concerns should not legitimize all calls for taking care of stakeholders.[3]

One might ask, why should management *not* be entrenched? At least that ensures an experienced hand at the helm. Or why should its position not be enhanced as compared to the shareholder? No doubt managers are frequently overpaid and too privileged, but that still recognizes competence in running the enterprise, something stockholders cannot usually boast. And, finally, managers are at times quite capable of speaking for all stakeholders in a corporation—at least they bear witness on the spot to the likely damage caused by absentee shareholders and their Wall Street agents, driven as these often are by short-term and purely financial considerations.

The increased operating efficiencies expected from leveraged buyouts and other kinds of corporate takeovers require "tough moves: cost cutting, asset sales, and rapid repayment of debt," states the *Wall Street Journal*.[4] No definitive research has appeared to my knowledge that links corporate takeovers to plant closings and other effects damaging to workers and communities, although Rudy Oswald, chief economist of the AFL-CIO, says, "Often workers lose their jobs as plants are closed or sold off. What's more, workers are often asked to pay part of the interest cost in a leveraged buyout by accepting lower wages." In manufacturing, intensive restructuring by means of mergers and acquisitions is believed to have been highly cost-effective; according to certain econometric wage models, such restructuring caused wage increases to be lessened by about 1 percent per year between 1983 and 1986, even as productivity significantly improved, making for "dramatic" declines in unit labor costs.[5]

Also indicative are some of the factors cited by business officials as influencing plant-closure and layoff decisions.[6] Six percent of these officials cited "acquired by another company" as one of the factors in plant closure; 27 percent cited consolidation of product line or service (a typical result of restructuring). The case of Goodyear Tire and Rubber Co., which in 1987 eliminated nearly four thousand jobs, among other "cost-cutting" measures, so as to realize the cash it needed to buy off the British corporate raider, Sir James Goldsmith—measures which Goldsmith most likely would have taken himself, had he succeeded in acquiring the firm—strikingly demonstrates the lack of responsibility on the part of powerful shareholders, and of the damage they can inflict.

It also reflects the *contractive* nature of corporate takeovers, as in fact do theories like Jensen's, trying to explain how shareholders gain. Such gain no longer arises from the innovation of new products or the creation of new markets—the historical sources of most capital gain. It arises from consolidation and increased market power (meaning increased pricing power, market share, and dominance over suppliers). Consolidations aim at reducing productive capacity, and at concentrating this in the more efficient and hence profitable plants. That has been the result of many takeovers and most other restructuring, and this latter term is in fact a euphemism for what really happens.

Here the outstanding case has been the oil and gas industry, which accounted for more than one-quarter of all takeovers in terms of asset value between 1981 and 1984. Notwithstanding the loss in productive capacity, the causes of which may to an extent have lain beyond the industry's control, the gains to shareholders from the efficiencies realized through such mergers as Gulf Oil and Chevron, Getty and Texaco, and Dupont and Conoco exceeded an estimated $17 billion.

Who Merges?

Jensen writes:

> Many sectors of the U.S. economy have been experiencing slower growth and, in some cases, even retrenchment. This phenomenon has many causes, including substantially increased foreign competition. The slow growth has meant increased takeover activity because takeovers play an important role in facilitating exit from an industry. . . .[7]

Thus, Jensen confirms the contractive character of takeovers—but how explain why the loss to society implied by these contractive movements translates into substantial gains to shareholders? That is a question Jensen's theory does not reach. We have indicated the answer: inasmuch as those gains cannot be attributed to shareholders' virtues as producers or innovators or even risk-taking entrepreneurs, they must derive from the actual and expected market power of the surviving (merged) firms, in addition to operating efficiencies frequently achieved at the expense of employees and communities. Put differently, the shareholder gains originate from a *redistribution of income* from two sources: (1) the employees and the local economies dependent upon them and (2) the consumers of the products and

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services, prices of which are determined largely by market power.

Among developments that confirm the increasing market power of corporations has been the virtually unhindered rise in horizontal mergers and acquisitions (i.e., of firms in the same industry that might otherwise be competitors). "Horizontal mergers, completely taboo before 1980, have become common, even between huge public firms."[8] This has held, for example, for deregulated industries, such as the airlines, broadcasting, trucking, banking, and securities, where more than one half of all merger and acquisitions activity (by value of assets) has occurred since 1980.

Is it coincidental that prices and other user charges levied by these industries have risen significantly? Airline fares rose 24 percent between 1982–84 and late 1987; other intercity public transportation, 34 percent; cable television 42 percent. Although long-distance telecommunications service has been subject to competition since the breakup of Bell Telephone in 1983, the local or regional Bell companies have retained their monopolies but under much more relaxed public surveillance; charges for local phone service—the majority of households makes no or few long-distance calls—have increased 41 percent. For intercity general freight, tariff data are not readily available, but there can be little doubt regarding increased market power from rising concentration ratios recently calculated: In 1985, the twenty largest over-the-road trucking firms accounted for close to 60 percent of all operating revenues, compared with just under 40 percent in 1978.[9]

Market power appears by and large to have diminished as a concern of antitrust policy. The "reallocation of economic resources to the highest-value use, a process which can improve efficiency and competition," has become the primary criterion in judging the market impact of mergers.[10] Although adoption of this criterion by the courts antedates the Reagan administration, the so-called Chicago school of antitrust regulators, brought in by the Reagan administration in 1980 as part of its effort to deregulate business, changed antitrust policy dramatically. For example, in the view of the one-time solicitor general of the United States, Robert Bork, horizontal mergers would hardly ever be curbed; mergers could capture up to two-fifths of given markets, and economic efficiency becomes the focus of antitrust guidelines. Bork has written that "antitrust policy should never concern itself with equity in income distribution"[11]—yet historically this concern has been at the base of antitrust policy understood as an instrument to preserve populist democracy.

William Adams, an antitrust expert at the University of Michigan, states it more circumspectly: "To the extent that market power affects the distribution of political influence as well as the distribution of income, antitrust authorities might properly be instructed to attack market power."[12] The very opposite of this view has prevailed. The retreat by the courts from antitrust since the sixties has been reinforced by the Reagan administration, fostering the enormous merger wave of the eighties. Unquestionably this wave has contributed to the growing disparity in the distribution of income and wealth during this decade.

The political influence that market power confers is exemplified by a recent front-page report in the *New York Times* (December 24, 1988). Opposition to antismoking legislation has been organized and amply funded by such cigarette manufacturers as Philip Morris and R. J. Reynolds. Inasmuch as both firms merged earlier with two of the largest food manufacturers (Kraft, Inc. and Nabisco), the two new "conglomerate" giants control vast resources for advertising and promotion. And this gives them the power effectively to "discourage media coverage of the hazards of smoking." They can threaten to withdraw their accounts from advertising agencies and the news media, and in a spectacular case, one of the two has done so. Public-service warnings against smoking could in time disappear, and state and local legislatures could be intimidated in their antismoking efforts.

The political and social implications of conglomerate mergers (firms in noncompeting industries) clearly are no less weighty than horizontal mergers. "Enormously large, rich in resources, the big corporations . . . command more resources than do most government units. . . . They are disproportionately powerful. . . . The large private corporation fits oddly into democratic theory and vision. Indeed it does not fit."[13] So writes Charles Lindblom at the end of his *Politics and Markets*. The merger wave of the eighties has vastly intensified the peril that large corporations pose to a democratic polity.

Whence the Growth in Debt?

Reading Hyman Minsky of Washington University, who has written extensively on the potentially destabilizing role of finance under post–World War II capitalism, we find three conditions that have facilitated the enormous growth of debt over the past ten to twenty years, and the speculative activity that

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this growth has fed: (1) financial innovations, including the emergence of money market funds and other structural changes in the financial sector of the economy; (2) the active role of the Federal Reserve Board as lender of last resort; and (3) the great weight of government in the economy and the recurring Federal budget deficit in supporting high levels of aggregate demand. All three conditions have tended to reduce the risk of indebtedness even though the second condition does not guarantee the success of any one leveraged corporate buyout or prevent the failure of any one bank (intervention by the Federal Reserve as lender of last resort depends upon the stakes involved).[14]

Among the "most fundamental" structural changes on Wall Street (i.e., the complex of security exchanges, insurance companies, and banks) has been the rise of institutional investors, meaning largely the pension funds managed by professionals, and hence the "professionalization" of share ownership and trading. Pension funds accounted for about 25 percent of the ownership of corporate securities in 1988, compared with 5 percent in the sixties and 15 percent in the seventies, and for two-thirds to three-fourths of all trading in the stock markets.

Among reasons for the pension funds becoming important Wall Street players have been certain regulatory changes that permit them to invest much higher proportions of their funds than earlier in stocks rather than bonds. Hence their income has become more dependent upon dividends, and the capital gain from speculative investment, than upon the fixed returns of bonds. Far from becoming the socially responsible investors urged by knowledgeable persons on the left, pension funds have played a key role in corporate takeovers. Nearly one-fourth of the capital committed to the loans extended for the RJR Nabisco buyout was provided by eleven state pension funds, with New York State contributing $1 billion. The pension manager's success is measured entirely by financial yardsticks (if within the bounds of "prudence"), and these yardsticks prescribe that the highest possible return be secured. That rules out "social" investment of pension fund contributions, unless specifically prescribed. The reality is that pension funds help provide "predatory pools of capital to facilitate the arbitrage process" that leads to buyouts and other kinds of corporate takeovers.[15]

The transformation of Wall Street has also been premised on underlying changes in monetary and fiscal policies and on the repeated affirmation by the Federal Reserve Board of its role as lender of last resort in case "disorderly" conditions place the financial system at risk. As the *Wall Street Journal* remarks:

> The economic history of the 1980s suggests that rapid growth of public and private debt is no longer a threat to prosperity but a guarantee that monetary and fiscal policy will be permissive enough to ensure that large borrowers do not default. . . . On Wall Street today, investors believe that government itself will serve as a shock absorber reducing the danger of depression and default.[16]

Such confidence is not unreasonable. Minsky has listed five major interventions by the Federal Reserve Board since 1980: the Hunt brothers' silver affair (1980); Drysdale Securities and Chase Bank (1982); Mexico (1982); Continental Illinois (1984); and the stock market collapse in October 1987 when the Board expanded the banks' reserve base so as to support the credit lines of stockbrokers.[17] In these instances, a crisis of liquidity threatened a swiftly widening cycle of bankruptcies or, in the case of the stock market collapse, a "free fall" of stock prices. Minsky concludes that the intervention of the board makes a repetition of the Great Depression of the 1930s unlikely insofar as it was caused by a deflationary spiral that the monetary authorities had been unable or unwilling to halt. Minsky is surely right in this.

Nevertheless, we must consider the consequences of the authorities' activism in trying to sustain financial stability. They have in effect validated rampant growth in debt, much of it lacking in socially redeeming purpose; facilitated contractive consolidations implicit in most corporate takeovers and leveraged buyouts; encouraged stock retirements, also by means of debt, thus helping to decapitalize industry and impeding long-term productive investment; and promoted a reactionary redistribution of income.

With all its activism in preserving the stability of the financial system, the Federal Reserve has been unable to prevent the weakening of the capital structure of American industry. Its own reports bear eloquent witness to this. It has reported "historically high" delinquencies on commercial, industrial, and real estate loans, rising loan charge-offs by banks, an "unusually high number of bonds [that] have been downgraded, in that the number of downgradings typically falls as an expansion matures," and "downgradings of corporate debts that have continued to exceed upgradings by a large margin."[18] Furthermore, interest payments take a bite out of corporate cash flow that runs, again, near "historically high" levels. "A downturn in earnings would place serious debt servicing strains on many individual firms." The takeover bids of the eighties have averaged more than $325 million per bid, four times more than during the seventies, generating a huge debt burden; "our financial history provides

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numerous reminders of the fragility of this type of situation."[19]

The Federal Reserve will not impose credit controls to at least make a stab at counteracting these trends. It "does not believe that arbitrary controls on the use of credit can be desirable or effective."[20] This is demonstrably false inasmuch as controls have been applied more or less flexibly at various times since World War II, and have been effective. The Federal Reserve Board, however, operates in the climate of business deregulation that has made the imposition of controls impolitic, and most of its members are themselves captives of aberrant free-market ideologies. It is able to spread a sort of safety net under the financial system when it faces disarray but unable to prevent its corruption.

The United States has a history of business and financial regulation. The relaxation if not subversion of such regulation over the past two decades is unlikely to last indefinitely, although its reinvigoration hinges on popular pressure. Such pressure was indispensable in creating the regulatory commissions and antitrust laws, and it will be no less indispensable in reimposing their control. These controls should first of all redirect the antitrust laws in the sense indicated by Walter Adams: The redistributive effects of mergers and acquisitions should be primary criteria in judging and challenging them. Controls should be imposed on the liability structures of merging firms and firms proposed for buyouts. It is no longer sufficient to curb the lending power of banks now that nonbank financial intermediaries have come to rival them, and at present no effective authority exists that can supervise these intermediaries. Finally, the prior rights of communities should be recognized before a plant can be closed because of "inefficiencies." Business should be compelled to recognize values that outrank efficiency.

Conservatives and others who stress efficiency might consider that the visible evidence that inequity breeds—e.g., the fact that after-tax income of the top 20 percent of the income distribution runs to nearly ten times that of the bottom 20 percent—is bound to impair efficiency by the damage it does to what little sense of social solidarity remains in America. □

Notes

[1] David J. Ravenscraft, "The 1980s Merger Wave: An Industrial Organization Perspective," in *The Merger Boom* (Proceedings of a conference sponsored by the Federal Reserve Bank of Boston, in October 1987), Lynn E. Browne and Eric S. Rosengren, eds., p. 19.

[2] Michael C. Jensen, "The Free Cash Flow Theory of Takeovers: A Financial Perspective on Mergers and Acquisitions and the Economy," in *The Merger Boom,* p. 102 ff.

[3] *Business Week,* December 19, 1988, p. 30.

[4] *Wall Street Journal,* December 5, 1988.

[5] "Discussion" by John D. Paulus and Stephen R. White of essay by Ravenscraft, *The Merger Boom,* pp. 41–42.

[6] General Accounting Office, *Plant Closings—Limited Advance Notice and Assistance Provided Dislocated Workers* (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, July 1987), p. 20.

[7] Jensen, "The Free Cash Flow," p. 128.

[8] Gregg A. Jarrell, "Financial Innovation and Corporate Mergers," in *The Merger Boom,* p. 55.

[9] Robert W. Kling, "Trucking Deregulation: Evolution of a New Power Structure," *Journal of Economic Issues* (December 1988):1203.

[10] Gregg A. Jarrell, "Financial Innovation," p. 55.

[11] Quoted in William James Adams, "Should Merger Policy Be Changed? An Antitrust Perspective," in *The Merger Boom,* p. 176.

[12] Ibid., p. 179.

[13] Charles Lindblom, *Politics and Markets* (New York: Basic Books, 1977), p. 356.

[14] For Minsky's views, see his "The Evolution of Financial Institutions and the Performance of the Economy," *Journal of Economic Issues* (June 1986):345–354.

[15] Jarrell, "Financial Innovation," p. 57.

[16] *Wall Street Journal,* November 19, 1988.

[17] Hyman P. Minsky, "Financial Crises and the Evolution of Capitalism: The Crash of '87: What Does It Mean?" Paper prepared for *Capitalist Development and Credit Theory: Accumulation, Regulation, and Spatial Restructuring,* Mark Gottdiener and Nicos Komninos, eds. July 1988, p. 6. For details of the five instances, see the relevant passages in William Greider, *Secrets of the Temple* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1987).

[18] *Federal Reserve Bulletin,* January 1988, pp. 3–4; and "Monetary Policy Report," August 1988, various passages.

[19] *Federal Reserve Bulletin,* July 1985, p. 516.

[20] *Federal Reserve Bulletin,* August 1988, p. 530.

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Mitchell Cohen

THE END OF JEANE KIRKPATRICK'S IDEOLOGY

If you want a picture of the future, imagine a boot stamping on a human face—forever." This famous line, spoken by O'Brien to the battered Winston Smith in Orwell's *1984*, embodies the fear so many felt in the aftermath of Hitler and Stalin. It was a fear born of terror; the world had never before seen anything quite like the dictatorships in Berlin and Moscow. As a work of political fiction, *1984* was a warning, and it is as a warning that it retains its force. It imagined a world of total domination, a political no exit in which history stops.

Political ideas in the form of a novel are one thing, a theoretical argument purporting to explain political realities is another. The assumption that the Soviet Union would not, in principle could not, change lay behind the shrill claims of cold warriors, in the 1950s as in the 1980s. Yet having insisted that the USSR was unchangeable, conservatives—old and neo—now want credit for the new winds blowing from the Kremlin. These winds are, we're supposed to believe, the result of the "no-nonsense" posture of the Reagan administration. They of the right understood the Russians. They, with their "hard-boiled" analyses, grasped the true nature of totalitarianism.

Did they?

No "theory" was more celebrated by the cold warriors than that provided by Jeane Kirkpatrick's article "Dictatorships and Double Standards," which appeared almost a decade ago in *Commentary*. While the left attacked the way she distinguished between "totalitarianism" and "authoritarianism," the Reagan administration used it to justify support for an assortment of miscreants running right-wing regimes, its hysterical anticommunism (evil empire), and its bloated defense budget.

But now, Jeane Kirkpatrick has admitted all. Nobody seems to have noticed, perhaps not even she herself. She did it last summer, at the Republican National Convention, when she declared: "We all hope for liberalization and reform of the Soviet Union. I personally take Mikhail Gorbachev's desire for economic reform seriously and also his understanding that internal changes are required to achieve it." With these words Kirkpatrick pronounced an epitaph for her intellectual claim to fame.

Kirkpatrick had initially presented a critique of the Carter foreign policy in the guise of a comparative structural analysis of two types of autocracy. Totalitarianism, she asserted, was something new in the world of political domination, and this because of its totalistic claims—it aimed to control and to penetrate every aspect of society. Its victory consequently meant the establishment of a system unalterable from within. The proof of this theoretical pudding was in the historical eating. What totalitarian regime (read: left-wing dictatorship) ever transformed itself significantly?

None, she said, contrasting this with the reality of authoritarian regimes, that is, with traditionalist—right-wing, pro-American—autocracies run by good ol' boys and their personal mafias for dictatorial pleasure and personal profit . . . but with no intention of "remaking society" as leftists do. Authoritarians permit a certain autonomy to churches, business, and other groups, thus engendering a small public space and a small civil society such as are proscribed under totalitarianism. Consequently, there is the possibility of some pluralism and change. Consequently, sometimes, some authoritarian states transform themselves for the better.

Underlying this is the problem of democratic political culture. Successful democracies, Kirkpatrick argued, are difficult to establish and maintain, partly because of the demands they make on their citizens. After all, they are *citizens*, not subjects. Democratic political culture is a long time in the making, and, according to the Kirkpatrick doctrine, it can never emerge from totalitarian regimes precisely because of their totalizing nature. Yet it can come out of authoritarian regimes because they do allow that little bit of elbow room.

Conclusion: Woe to Uncle Sam should he push democracy and wimpy liberal notions of human rights on authoritarian regimes. It disrupts "traditional" patterns of life. Plain folks won't know who—or how—to obey anymore, and our "friends," the good ol' boys, will lose their grip.

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Thus Jeane Kirkpatrick in 1979. How does her "realism" stand up to a decade of realty?

Let's begin with the USSR, clearly Kirkpatrick's chief target. Since Mikhail Gorbachev came to power, just three years ago:

- The restructuring of the Soviet regime has been proposed. The role of the party is to be restricted, and there have been limited competitive elections for some posts.
- *Perestroika* has led to legalization of some private businesses and cooperatives and the initiation of economic reform plans, allowing for the emergence of some market forces. The USSR now seeks Western investment and will permit foreigners to hold controlling interests in joint ventures. Most significantly, Gorbachev is promoting a shift away from totally collectivized agriculture and toward leasehold farming.
- *Glasnost* has permitted the publication in the Soviet Union of George Orwell's *1984*, along with other previously forbidden works ranging from Nadezhda Mandelstam's *Hope Against Hope* to Jean-Paul Sartre's *Freud*. Andrei Sakharov and other dissidents have been freed. Unprecedented public demonstrations now occur; the Soviet press engages daily in startlingly open debate; Old Bolsheviks like Nikolai Bukharin and Christian Rakovsky, victimized in Stalin's heyday, have been exonerated.
- A new chapter has opened in Soviet-American relations, and a policy is emerging in Moscow that appears aimed at putting the cold war, like Leonid Brezhnev's legacy, into cold storage. Krushchev once warned Mao that atomic weapons don't obey class principles; now Gorbachev has declared that the danger of nuclear war is more urgent than traditional Leninist canons. The Soviets have begun an exit from Afghanistan and have even allowed a consular team from the Zionist devil-state to come to Moscow.

What of China? In the decade since Deng Xiaoping (re)consolidated his power:

- Agriculture has been significantly decollectivized in a country where some 80 percent of the population is rural.
- The role of the party has been curtailed on the level of basic production. The authority of factory directors has increased at the expense of the local party committees, and directors must now answer to the state rather than to the committees.
- Cooperative and private enterprises have been permitted in services and small industry.
- The Shanghai Stock Exchange, closed in 1949, has reopened.
- China has facilitated a wide array of joint ventures with foreign capital.
- Between the early 1970s and the early 1980s the percentage of China's GNP spent on the military dropped from 13 percent to 8.6 percent, and half a million soldiers have been demobilized.
- In 1987 Premier Zhao Ziyang declared that in a few years only 30 percent of the Chinese economy would be planned.*

Now, none of these reforms establishes democracy, either of the Jeffersonian or the Eugene V. Debsian style. This much, however, is certain: The transformations have come from within the two regimes. The future is, of course, uncertain; Mikhail could go the way of Nikita, and the Chinese, whose political history is prone to great lurches, have recently retrenched somewhat. Yet only the blindest of the blind could insist that what Gorbachev and Deng have brought forth is merely incidental. Could it be that totalitarian regimes have become merely authoritarian?

What is essential is this: As of 1989 more than one path lies before the Soviet Union, and China is well along a road unrecognizable by Maoist standards.

Yet this wasn't supposed to happen, at least not according to Kirkpatrick's famous theory. Cold warriors could aver, with reason, that Soviet and Chinese citizens have not been really empowered through the establishment of free elections. Such recalcitrants apparently haven't read Jeane Kirkpatrick with care. She argued, we recall, that a long, hard road must be traveled if a political culture is to develop that can support democratic institutions. Jimmy Carter's great flaw was to push reforms on dictators who ruled societies unprepared for democracy. Jeane Kirkpatrick urged consideration of the dangers of disrupting customary routines of life, "habitual rhythms of work and leisure, habitual patterns of residence, habitual patters of family and personal relations." She told us that "because the miseries of traditional life are familiar, they are bearable to ordinary people who, growing up in society, learn to cope, as children born to untouchables in India acquire the skills and attitudes necessary for survival in the miserable roles they are to play."

Change a few words and we have a perfect response to anyone who complains that the Soviet leader hasn't turned the USSR into a Western-style

* For a valuable presentation of the problems of reform, from which some of my facts and figures come, see Marshall I. Goldman and Merle Goldman, "Soviet and Chinese Economic Reform," *Foreign Affairs: America and the World 1987/88*.

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democracy overnight. Ironically, her logic could make equally great fodder for the anti-*perestroika* party conservatives in Moscow or Beijing. Well, it's a flexible theory. In any event, on its reasoning, one can only conclude that Washington ought not to press the Soviets or the Chinese for further reforms. Who knows what chaos might ensue?

Speaking of chaos, where does the Cultural Revolution fit Kirkpatrick's theory? Surely it represents the heights of totalitarianism for her: The deified Chairman was dictator over the proletariat; his picture was held aloft by millions of chanting Red Guards who sought to penetrate every nook and cranny of Chinese life with his quotations.

The Cultural Revolution was, among other things, the result of a struggle between two factions within Chinese communism—that of Mao and that of Liu Shaoqui and Deng Xiaoping. Mao, in political retreat after the great flop backward of his Great Leap Forward of the late 1950s, used the Cultural Revolution to reassert himself and—intentionally—wrecked the party and state. In the end, his great totalitarian moment created the very preconditions for Deng's later success at reform. Where Gorbachev pursues his program against opposition from long-entrenched party and government machineries, the Cultural Revolution and its aftermath partly cleared Beijing's bureaucratic decks. The Chinese party and state had to be reconstructed in the 1970s, and this was one factor that paved the way for Deng's innovations. One might say that in the Chinese case, totalitarianism actually created the possibilities for its own demise and reform. In any event, this, too, is incomprehensible in terms of the Kirkpatrick approach.

What has happened—what is happening—in Moscow and Beijing compels a rethinking of all those theories of totalitarianism that held such sway in post–World War II America. A good starting point was provided when Michael Walzer criticized Kirkpatrick some years ago for mistaking ideal-types for reality. Her concept of "totalitarianism" presented "a picture of horrifying perfection never quite achieved in fact." But instead of using it as an analytic tool for comparing existing tyrannies, in the same way "capitalism" can be used as a standard for examining the multiplicity of existing capitalisms, Kirkpatrick, who revels in her "realism," replaced actuality with the model and then divided up the world into totalitarians and nontotalitarians on this basis. The error lay in her very mode of thinking.

Neoconservative *realpolitik* has run aground on reality. □

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Joanne Barkan

SWEDEN: NOT YET PARADISE, BUT. . . .

I heard this story several times in Stockholm: It was the final television debate before the 1982 parliamentary election. Olof Palme, then a former prime minister of Sweden, was about to speak. His Social Democratic Labor party (SAP)—out of office for six years—was concluding a demanding campaign. The conservatives, buoyed by an aggressive right-wing wave in Western Europe, threatened voters that an SAP victory would slam Sweden behind the barbed-wire barricades of totalitarian communism. Journalists kept pressing Palme to reveal his ideological identity. He accepted the challenge, and with a sizable portion of the population watching, Palme proclaimed himself a democratic socialist.

Today the eyes of SAP activists still light up when they recall that speech—one of the few times in recent years that a Social Democratic leader in Sweden has been able to embrace the "S" word so forcefully. It was a memorable exception, they say, pulled off by an unusually charismatic leader during a conservative period. Voters returned the SAP to office in 1982, and the party has maintained a minority government since then. But its public figures continue to avoid the issue of socialism. When pressed by the media, prime minister Ingvar Carlsson simply says that he is a Social Democrat.

For many Swedes, the word socialism conjures up images of prison camps and food lines. The concept is not much more popular there than it is in the United States. Activists in the social democratic movement express some of the same wariness, but their position is complex. Many consider themselves committed socialists, but few have any interest in what has traditionally defined socialism—public ownership of the means of production. As the information officer of the SAP told me, "Socializing ownership would be very un-Swedish."

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The aversion has historical and geopolitical roots. Early on, Swedish socialists judged the Soviet experiment to be a failure. Identification with that system was made all the more unappealing by a centuries-old fear of the neighboring Russian empire.

The ownership/socialization issue doesn't begin to exhaust the meaning of socialism for Swedish Social Democrats, but it does provide a handy way for American leftists to categorize the Swedish model. Everyone knows that 85 percent of Swedish industry is privately owned, making that economy the least socialized (in the usual sense) of Western Europe. Starting with that fact, American radicals usually describe the model in a single breath: Sweden has a capitalist economy with a large welfare state; the government taxes at a steep rate to provide extensive social services.

But this standard description skips right over the most interesting features of the Swedish system. A better sketch would look something like this: A solidaristic wage policy (centralized bargaining to achieve equal pay for equivalent work nationwide) forces unproductive enterprises to shape up or go under because they can't pay low wages—and the SAP government doesn't subsidize failing businesses. This raises the efficiency of the entire economy. Strong tax incentives channel profits into reinvestment, boosting productivity and creating jobs.

Labor-market policy is designed to support economic restructuring while protecting wage earners. It includes a vast program of job placement, training with pay, interim work in the public sector, vocational counseling, grants for worker relocation, education grants, subsidies to companies to retrain workers and to speed up hiring when expansion is anticipated, and sheltered employment for the disabled.

Since the transition to new jobs is eased, the trade

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unions can cooperate in industrial rationalization, once again increasing efficiency and growth. Surplus from a dynamic economy supports a vast system of universal social welfare programs. Progressive tax policies reduce income inequalities, and this in turn keeps the market from listing too heavily toward luxury goods. The government oversees the immense pension funds, thereby exercising some control over investment and capital formation.

National legislation prevents arbitrary firings, allows workers to halt production if they find unsafe conditions, guarantees union representation on the boards of directors of companies with more than twenty-five employees, and obliges employers to negotiate with local unions before implementing any major changes.

No one in Sweden—right or left—calls this socialism. But it's hardly run-of-the-mill capitalism either. Control over the economy is divided between two equally matched but contending forces. A dynamic capitalist class wields its power to invest, while a left social democratic movement draws its strength from two other sources—state power held almost continuously for more than a half-century and a high level of unionization in society. Some 90 percent of blue-collar workers and 75 percent of white-collar workers belong to unions.

Having evolved since the SAP first came to power in 1932, the model helped transform one of Europe's most desperately poor nations (more than 20 percent of the population emigrated to North America before the First World War). Today Sweden not only has one of the highest living standards in the world, but income differentials are smaller than in other Western industrial countries. The labor-market-participation rate is one of the highest worldwide (for women, the highest). Unemployment has now dropped to 1.5 percent while the West European average is stuck at 9 percent and just across the sound in Denmark, the jobless rate hovers around 11 percent. Moreover, Sweden has accomplished all this while competing in a volatile international market; the country depends on exports, with one-third of Gross Domestic Product going into world trade.

If the facts look good on paper, they look even better in Stockholm. Like many European capitals, this city of seven hundred thousand is lovely with its gracious architecture and dozens of parks, all beautifully maintained. But unlike other large urban centers, you'll find not one pocket of poverty. Built on a group of islands at the point where the Baltic Sea meets Lake Mälaren, Stockholm's neighborhoods are surrounded by water and intersected by canals. Walking down to the water's edge, a New Yorker automatically cringes. What might come floating by? But the water is crystal clear—clean enough for salmon fishing next to Parliament and summertime swimming off the terrace steps of City Hall.

Who could complain? A lot of people do—but in a limited way. The social democratic movement has fashioned a system balanced on the edge of two ideological and economic orders. No matter how well the system functions, neither those to the left of the SAP nor those to the right (together more than 56 percent of the voters) get exactly what they want—or think they want.

For socialists to the left of the SAP—they include the small Eurocommunist party (VPK with 5.8 percent of the vote), tiny sects, and independents—the model is inadequate because property relations have not changed. The means of production are still privately owned, wage labor still generates wealth, and the surplus created by workers is appropriated to finance the system. The national secretary of the VPK summarizes his view of the Social Democrats: "They're not socialists."

But for every SAP activist I spoke with—youth organizers, local leaders, strategists, labor economists, party staffers—values, not formal ownership, define the socialist project. Democracy, equality, freedom, social justice, and solidarity function as concrete goals that determine party policies. Socialization is seen not as an end, but as a possible means—and perhaps not the most effective one. Some economists in the left wing of the movement think that a form of socialization—perhaps through the huge pension funds—may be necessary in the future to maintain control over the economy. But for now, activists are skeptical that socialization would improve anyone's daily life.

Groups to the left present no immediate threat to the SAP. At the other end of the spectrum, however, Swedish conservatives mounted a serious challenge that began in the mid-1970s and is waning only now. They benefited from the rightward shift throughout Western Europe, with one group—the Moderate party—promoting a Swedish-style Thatcherism.

The Moderates insist that the socialization of their society has gone too far. But they don't see restrictions on private business as the main problem. They rail against high marginal income taxes, the welfare system, and what they regard as the gradual collectivization of Swedish life.

Mats Svegfors, chief political editor of the conservative paper *Svenska Dagbladet,* is an important Moderate ideologue. He argues that steeply progressive taxes make it impossible for upper-middle-class people to raise their standard of living. This, he

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maintains, will provoke a "brain drain" in Sweden—something a tiny country with limited human resources can't afford.

Svegfors would like to see the public welfare system privatized to increase quality, efficiency, and choice. But the welfare system is just one manifestation of a deeper ill—the never-ending expansion of the intrusive state. According to Svegfors, the Social Democrats approach every problem by creating a new public institution or a new piece of bureaucracy. This, he insists, erodes free society.

Although the Moderates lost votes in the 1985 and 1988 elections and now stand at 18.3 percent, they've articulated discontents felt by many Swedes who don't support the SAP. But the vast majority of these people—including a good number of Moderate party voters—don't endorse the fundamental changes advocated by the most frank of the conservative ideologues. Neither the adjustments people want nor their ideological assumptions have anything to do with dismantling the system.

What do non–Social Democrats complain about? Take, for example, two Stockholm women in their late twenties: Eva works as a financial consultant for a small private company; Beatrice is a systems analyst in a huge social service administration. Both call themselves businesswomen and both vote for the Moderates. They complain about the lack of freedom and choice. Why shouldn't people be able to start their own schools and day-care centers? (It's legal, but obtaining a permit and covering costs are difficult because the government sets fees and standards.) Why should people in Stockholm be assigned to a hospital rather than choose one themselves? The tax system kills all initiative because people can't keep what they earn. There's no room for creativity.

By the time they finish their report, it sounds as though they're living in Poland. Then Eva describes her job, which she loves. The firm is young and pays a low salary, but the work is creative, she's autonomous, and there's the possibility of growth. Beatrice admits that she takes a political stand that's farther to the right than she really is; she hopes that by pressing hard from that direction, things will change a little. If she lived in West Germany, she'd be a Social Democrat. Eva agrees.

Zvi, now in his early thirties, emigrated from Israel when he was eleven, completed a medical degree in Sweden, and now does cancer research at the prestigious Karolinska Institute in Stockholm. He complains that the push for excellence is not strong enough in the Swedish system; the commitment to equality means that co-workers look askance at anyone who stands out.

We chat in the handsome apartment where he lives with his invalid mother. Why so many wheelchairs? He explains there's one for outdoors, one for the bathroom, one for eating, and so on—all supplied free by the health care system. The system also provides nursing and housekeeping help eight hours a day. And when the landlord renovated the bathroom without making it wheelchair accessible, the government required that the renovation be redone. Zvi smiles and shrugs, "So I guess it's a good thing. . . ."

Herbert, a longtime activist with the Moderate party, worked as a journalist for a conservative news agency before joining a consulting firm. In the United States, he claims, he would never vote for a Reagan or a Bush. He'd be a liberal Democrat.

Ivar complains about taxes and welfare cheats as we have lunch on the patio of his small country cabin. He thoroughly dislikes the Social Democrats. Later he points out a tidy trailer camp that sits on a fine piece of lakefront property. The government rents the trailers to workers who don't own country cabins. Another good thing.

I go mushroom collecting with Robert, a retired conservative journalist. He complains that all income above his government pension is taxed at 70 percent. This rankles him. As we hike, he tells me with great pride about *allemansrätten*—the traditional Swedish right to the land. Anyone can walk, picnic, or even sleep on *any* piece of property in Sweden as long as the land and what stands on it is treated with respect. Robert clearly loves the standard of equality expressed in *allemansrätten* more than he dislikes the tax policy.

Almost without exception, the lists of complaints I heard ended with the observation, "Of course, things are better here than anywhere else." And many of the conservatives I spoke to would be liberals (in the American sense) or even left liberals outside Sweden. Although the entire political spectrum is as broad as it is in other countries, the vast majority of Swedes fall into a relatively narrow band, left of center. The explanation for this seems fairly simple: ideological consensus. Most Swedes outside the social democratic movement consider equality, social justice, democracy, solidarity, and freedom to be values that society must act on.

When asked to explain why these values resonate powerfully in Sweden, nonmovement people look puzzled; they'll mention something about the structure of Swedish feudalism or medieval agriculture. Americans often say that Sweden is a

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consensual society—as if the consensus could have formed around any set of values simply for reasons of national temperament or tradition. In fact, the values that provide political cohesion are social democratic values, internalized over the course of fifty years of Social Democratic government. Here is a plain case of ideological hegemony.

In retrospect, it's clear that establishing hegemony has depended on the labor movement and the SAP's choosing a "universalist strategy." They shaped the system from early on to benefit just about everyone—not only the working class and the poor. Child allowances, education, health care, day care, and disability are not means-tested. Benefits for sick leave, parental leave, unemployment, and pensions are based on a percentage of income within a system that reduces income disparities. The movement emphasized economic growth and high employment in the context of social justice and equality—and then made good on its promises.

As a result, almost all Swedes view poverty, extreme inequalities of wealth, and the degradation that comes with unemployment as unacceptable. The assumption that society should strive for a modicum of equality provides support for the basic social democratic model even among those who don't vote for the SAP. Campaigning openly to disassemble the system wins no elections.

Conservatives like Mats Svegfors understand that this ideological hegemony is one of the greatest obstacles facing the Moderates. If leaders in his party were completely open, he says, they'd admit that equality is not one of their central values. But to compete in the political arena, they make accommodations. In what Svegfors calls his utopia, the Moderates would dominate the government for twenty years, transferring to the market prerogatives now exercised by the state. At the end of that time, he's sure equality as a popular value would be weaker than it is today; the level of material inequality would be greater; but as compensation, market forces would re-energize society.

The current consensus in Sweden prevents the most rigorous Moderate party thinking from becoming party program. The degree of consensus also makes it difficult for the other "bourgeois" parties—the Liberal party and the Center party—to present an overall alternative. Instead they try to win votes with specific policy recommendations—for teachers' salaries, Third World textile imports, charges for toxic-waste disposal, and so on. The trick for these two groups is to differentiate themselves from the SAP without alienating the progressive elements within their ranks.

To make matters worse for the opposition parties, they must compete against each other for the same pool of votes (SAP supporters rarely shift to the right); at the same time, they must convince people that they can govern together. In the 1988 campaign, the three bourgeois parties presented a joint proposal on child-care allowances as an alternative to comprehensive public day care, but they also bickered over tax policy. This didn't inspire confidence.

Having a fragmented opposition is a great advantage for the Social Democrats. Yet the movement also needs its opposition. Governing for fifty-one of the last fifty-seven years, the SAP could have become an entrenched network of corrupt interests or a behemoth incapable of responding to new conditions. Instead the party and the unions react to constant pressure from the right, the left, and dissident tendencies within the movement.

Challenged by the Green party's energetic campaign in the 1988 elections, for example, the SAP made the environment a key issue. This was quite a shift since, by all accounts, ecology—unlike employment and economic growth—had not been central to the Social Democratic political culture.

The party's youth organization, the SSU, has embraced decentralization of the public sector, democratic participation, and greater choice as its primary themes. Countering the conservatives' call for privatization, the younger activists argue that the system can be restructured within the public sphere. They (and much of the movement's left wing) keep badgering the SAP to push harder on these matters. Meanwhile, the opposition on all sides is demanding improvements in the health care system which is plagued by bottlenecks and inefficiencies. There's a serious nursing shortage, and many people wait two years for elective surgery.

Like any complex mechanism, the Swedish system needs constant readjustment. Not only can services be upgraded; the government must regularly shift policies in response to the world economy. When the SAP returned to office in 1982, it was saddled with budget deficits, rising unemployment, and a weakened position on the international market. The SAP turned the situation around, avoiding the Thatcheroid austerity practiced elsewhere in Europe. Now, however, many union economists argue that corporate profits are too high; wealth is being redistributed away from wage earners; and recent tax and credit laws undermine equality. Through the immense trade-union structure, they will pressure the government for policy changes.

Meanwhile, the SAP must also refurbish its image. The party lost votes in the last election because of scandals ranging from illegal arms sales

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and the mismanaged investigation of Olof Palme's murder to the head of the trade union confederation's using his influence to get an apartment for his daughter and cabinet ministers indulging in a drink at Friday afternoon meetings. Even lesser transgressions undermine the Social Democrats, who are held to exacting standards by the electorate. Some SAP activists think the media—especially the powerful conservative newspapers—hound their party more aggressively than the others. But most Social Democrats accept the notion that the behavior of public figures must not contradict movement values.

Thinking about the future of the Swedish model brings a few questions to mind. How can the movement counter apathy? Everyone has noticed a decline in participation. As a symptom, nonvoters increased in 1988; only 86 percent of the electorate went to the polls, the lowest figure since 1964.

Will racism grow as the number of non-Nordic immigrants increases? Residents of a prosperous agricultural community called Sjöbo voted in 1988 not to accept fifteen immigrants who were to be settled there. This display of xenophobia made the rest of the nation shudder—which was judged to be a good sign. But no one knows if other Sjöbos will crop up.

Will the Social Democrats be able to maintain their labor-market policy and control over the economy after EEC integration in 1992 (Sweden is not an EEC member)? Can the solidaristic wage policy, which has deteriorated during the 1980s, be rebuilt? Will the government manage to set up a viable alternative to nuclear power (which now supplies 50 percent of all electricity) by the legislated 2010 deadline?

Party and union activists seem to tackle these questions with something better than optimism. They have a self-critical confidence. They move with ease in managing the system, but they probe constantly—picking out problems, researching solutions. Their level of expertise and sophistication is impressive. But there's something else as well. These Social Democrats approach their project much the way a sculptor approaches a piece of clay—with a sense of shaping and transforming. This is where the best creative energy goes.

Right now a number of strategists and economists think the movement needs a new goal in order to avoid stagnation. They'd like to see a campaign to improve the "quality of work" throughout society. Yes, people have jobs, they say, but are those jobs really satisfying? In a post-Fordist economy where work is more diversified, it won't be easy to design a program for better conditions in a host of specific situations. But that's the challenge. And like full employment and social welfare, quality work is the kind of vast mission that the movement seems to thrive on.

Watching the salmon fishers in front of Parliament and remembering the despair in the streets of New York, I thought Swedish social democracy looked good. But I wondered about the relationship between accomplishment and approval for a movement. Were the Social Democrats ever resentful that less than half the electorate votes for the SAP? Did the complaining discourage them? I broached the subject with Mats Hellström, minister of agriculture. "People don't seem very grateful," I remarked. Hellström considered this for a moment but then shrugged his shoulders and said, "Why should they be?"

Indeed. There's no paternalism here. Swedes regard the fundamental goals of the movement as basic rights. After all, they are citizens of a credible democracy. □

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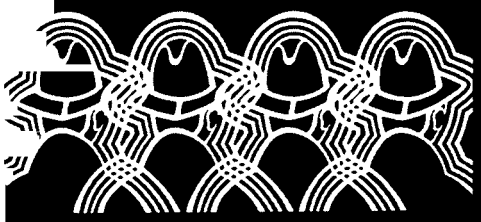

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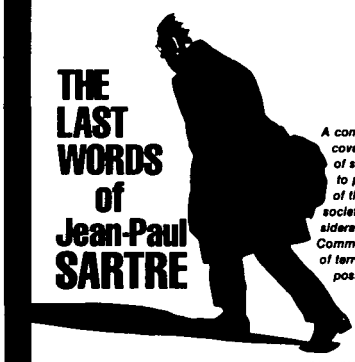

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TOWARD A NEW SOCIALISM

Beyond the Limits of the Present

At the end of 1988, UNICEF reported that half a million children had died during the year, in part because of cuts in social programs in the Third World. At the same time the World Bank estimated that in 1988 the seventeen most highly indebted countries of the global South had given rich economies and multinational lending institutions $31.3 billion more than they received from them. The World Bank also reported that since 1982 the Third World debt had doubled, despite the draconian cuts in domestic programs and the use of export profits to pay off the banks of America and Europe. The debt, the Bank said, now totaled $1.32 trillion dollars.

As a result, political strains were showing up in places like Argentina and Brazil. Democracy, only recently returned to those societies, finds it difficult to win popular support for the suffering demanded by the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the rules of the world market. Experts talk, with good reason, of the possibility that the military might once again take over.

Such events have clearly been disastrous for the poor of the globe—the dead children first and foremost. But the poverty in the South was bad for the North as well. Because the Latin debtors were spending so much of their hard cash earnings to service old loans, *Business Week* noted early in 1989, they had little money left to buy goods from the United States. So, that shrewd corporate publication concluded, the newly elected George Bush should, in the pursuit of American goals, find ways to reduce the debt pressure.

There is a considerable irony in this exercise in enlightened self-interest, for the international financial crisis, with its threatening consequences for both North and South, was created by banks operating on a similar philosophy. Indeed, the very actions that led to the world debt crisis were widely hailed in the seventies as proof of the resilience and creativity of the capitalist system.

When the Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC) quadrupled the price of oil in 1973–4, tens of billions of dollars were shifted from the advanced capitalisms to the largely underdeveloped oil countries. There were widespread fears that this vast transfer of wealth would lead to recession or even depression in the North, as money and the internal demand it paid for went South. Then, however, the "invisible hand" took over under the aegis of the banks. The relative poverty of the OPEC powers meant that their ability to invest their huge gains in their own modernization was limited. So a good portion of their profits was sent back to northern financial centers where it could help fund energy-saving programs and stimulate the Western economy in general.

Since northern capital was at that time not too anxious to invest in its own problematic economies, there was money to burn, or, more precisely, to lend recklessly to the poor, nonoil countries of the Third World. Profiteering lenders "recycled" OPEC money to the deserving poor countries, which had just seen their energy bill, paid in inflated dollars, soar. So with the money all but forced upon these risky regimes—the banks had to put the petrodollars to "work" at almost any cost—the fact that government grants and concessional loans from the North were declining was no

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problem. Private cash had come to the rescue and profit-making priorities were promoting the global common good just as Adam Smith and David Ricardo said they would.

For a while, this idyll seemed to come true. In the mid-seventies, growth slowed in the advanced economies but continued at a brisk pace in the Third World and particularly in Latin America, which received most of the banks' largesse. Then came the second OPEC price hike in 1979, and in 1982 the severest recession since the Great Depression, and the stratospheric interest rates with which American monetarists fought inflation without a thought of international consequences. Markets for the developing countries contracted at the same time that the service charges on their loans followed the American interest rates through the roof. The international debt crisis was on.

But was this crisis really the unintended consequence of the banks' innovative recycling? Couldn't it have been a mere case of bad luck? I think not. The world market is structured so as to keep the poor countries in a position inferior to the rich and that is why Ricardo's prediction, based on his now hallowed theory of "comparative advantage," that free trade would produce increasing global well-being has been falsified since it was made in 1815. Throughout the post–World War II period, even after decolonialization had brought independence to the nations of Africa and Asia, political sovereignty in the Third World was routinely subverted by economic dependence. What was new was that, because of unprecedented economic internationalization, the misery of the subject peoples had become a problem for the affluent.

But that was not the only difficulty faced by the wealthy countries during the last ten or fifteen years. After a quarter of a century of the "Great Prosperity" that followed the Second World War, growth and productivity, tremendously stimulated by the mass consumption of the social democratic (and American liberal) welfare state, began to decline. Stagflation (simultaneous high inflation and unemployment) led to the triumph of conservatives in a number of Western societies—Sweden, Britain, the United States, and West Germany among them—and the apparent victory of a new, rightist ideology. Ronald Reagan and Margaret Thatcher were the ideologists-in-chief.

Still, when one looked below the surface of this conservative success, it turned out to be both problematic and precarious. Neither Reagan nor Thatcher delivered on their ideologies. The American President had proposed a "supply-side" recovery stimulated by disproportionate tax cuts for the upper classes, who would invest their bonanza in productivity and plants, and thereby generate efficiency and employment. In fact, after the worst recession since the thirties, there was an old-fashioned demand-side recovery based on huge deficits, military "Keynesianism" funding every Pentagon fantasy, and foreign borrowing.

Similarly with the British prime minister. Thatcher never did practice the monetarism she preached. She was reelected with a minority of the votes primarily because of the disarray of her opposition and she benefited from North Sea oil profits that are soon to end.

Nor did Reagan and Thatcher, for all the conservative rhetoric, reduce state expenditure, supposedly their supreme aim. Walter Fackler of the University of Chicago Business School estimated that real government expenditures rose by 3.5 percent between 1980 and 1988 in America. During the eight Thatcher years between 1979 and 1987, economist Samuel Brittan has calculated, real public spending increased by 14 to 16 percent! By 1986–7, Conservative outlays as a percentage of Gross Domestic Product (GDP) were higher than they had been in the last year of Labour party rule. What did change in the United States and Britain was the identity of those who benefited from state action. Between 1977 and 1987 in America the average real income of all families went up by $747 (in 1987 dollars), but groups in the bottom 80 percent saw their purchasing power drop while the income of the top 1 percent rose by an average of $134,513. In the United Kingdom, the top 30 percent of the people received 53.3 percent of pretax income

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in 1968, a Labour year, and 60.4 percent in 1983 under Thatcher.

More broadly, the "recovery" in both the United States and Britain was achieved in classic capitalist style, that is, at the expense of the most vulnerable. Entire regions were devastated (the industrial Midwest in the United States, the North in Britain) as capital restructured and unemployment and then low-wage employment rose. The real incomes of working people dropped. Indeed, in almost every advanced capitalist country there was a "new poverty" at the time of a proclaimed prosperity.

Both internationally and nationally, then, capitalism continues to be a contradictory, crisis-ridden system that at its best makes advances financed by the vulnerable and at its worst imposes priorities that contribute to the deaths of half a million children a year. Its good times are compatible with a rise in homelessness and hunger in the most affluent economies the world has ever known; its bad times ruin lives, communities, and even entire regions, and are a plague for the vast majority of humankind in the Third World.

So, then, as far as the socialists are concerned, is God in his heaven and all right with the world; or, is all wrong with capitalism and socialism the only alternative? Not quite. In fact, as every serious political person knows, the democratic socialist movement is in deep crisis. Any analysis of the continuing relevance of socialism must deal with the palpable disarray of the left as well as the often hidden contradictions of the right.

Socialism Under Siege

In part the current crisis of socialism is the result of misunderstandings on the part of non- and antisocialists and, unfortunately, even of some socialists themselves. One must quickly add that a widely believed misunderstanding is, alas, more politically powerful than a solid, widely ignored fact. In part the crisis is the consequence of a genuine confusion—at times a near bankruptcy—in socialist thought and action.

It is an irony that the historic changes now taking place in the Soviet Union under Mikhail Gorbachev often work, in the short run, to discredit socialism. For instance, an influential recent article in the *New Yorker* by Robert Heilbroner, perceptive and nuanced in many ways, began:

> Less than seventy-five years after it officially began, the contest between capitalism and socialism is over: capitalism has won. The Soviet Union, China, and Eastern Europe have given us the clearest possible proof that capitalism organizes the material affairs of humankind more satisfactorily than socialism: that however inequitably or irresponsibly the marketplace may distribute goods, it does so better than the queues of a planned economy; however mindless the culture of commercialism, it is more attractive than state moralism; and however deceptive the ideology of a business civilization, it is more believable than that of a socialist one.

Yet for at least a generation practically no democratic socialist has accepted Heilbroner's underlying assumption: that the Soviet Union and similar societies are either exemplars or approximations of socialism. The fact that centralized, dictatorial planning is not merely antidemocratic but monstrously inefficient precisely because it is antidemocratic has been an axiom of socialist discourse for years. Indeed, under the impact of the Cold War, some of the more right-wing socialists *overstated* that truth and argued that totalitarianism was a completely seamless evil that did not permit any internal change, i.e., that what has in fact happened could not happen.

These facts notwithstanding, socialists are now being blamed for an economic mess that they long analyzed and deplored. And, as I pointed out in the Fall 1988 *Dissent,* the confusion is made all the more pernicious by the simplistic assumption that capitalism is the market economy and socialism the antimarket economy. Those who advanced this formula are blissfully unaware of the fact that even such an "orthodox" Marxist as Leon Trotsky insisted, more than half a century ago, that markets and prices were essential to any transition to socialism. They are also unaware that there is a long social-democratic tradition—as in the book brilliantly summing up the prevailing socialist wisdom of the fifties, Anthony Crosland's *The Future of Socialism*—

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that markets can only really work in an egalitarian, socialist society.

These historic distinctions and complexities are ignored; so is the fact that contemporary "free enterprise" and the Japanese and other Asian variants are dominated by monopoly and oligopoly and guided by pervasive state rigging of supposedly autonomous markets. All subtlety disappears and it is simply asserted that Gorbachev's move away from the totalitarian command economy is a retreat from "socialism" to capitalism.

In the case of the Third World, socialists are not quite so blameless. Out of an understandable identification with the victims of colonial injustice, some socialists did indeed refuse to see, or even rationalized, the repressiveness and inefficiency of the new nations calling themselves socialist. Many of us did insist on the tragic truth defined long ago by Marx: that the socialization of poverty would lead, not to socialism, but to the "old crap" in new form. Still, when so many of these countries failed, or turned toward market solutions, or when the Cuba that had excited so many romantic hopes of a genuine third way, neither capitalist nor Stalinist, simply insisted on dictatorship even when to do so was clearly an economic as well as a moral and political disaster, the socialist ideal itself came to seem tarnished.

The crisis of the social democratic welfare state in the mid-seventies was an even more complex aspect of the crisis of socialism itself. Here is how Peter Jenkins, a perceptive British journalist who wrote, as it seems, out of sadness rather than anger, described the triumph of Thatcherism:

> The Socialist Age was coming to an end. What was happening in Britain was part of a world-wide phenomenon: everywhere in the industrialised democratic world the old manual working class was in decline, trade union membership was falling, old class loyalties were crumbling. . . . In Southern Europe socialist parties might still have a role to play as agents of belated democratisation; democratic socialism survived in the small neutralist countries of Scandinavia; but across the whole swath of northern Europe the mode of politics which had dominated the post-war period, and much of the twentieth century, was in decline. . . .
>
> In part, democratic socialism was the victim of its own success. The welfare societies it had helped to build had opened other and less-collectivist avenues of advance. Affluence had eaten into old class loyalties. Education had provided ladders of escape from the working class. But democratic socialism—or, in the continental usage, social democracy—was inflationary. The principle of social advance through the agency of the State when combined with the acquisitiveness of mass consumer societies made them everywhere hard to govern. All across Europe there have been reactions against the power of trade unions, seen as the engines of inflation, and, as inflation went on the rampage, against the State itself.

Obviously Jenkins describes an important *political* truth (as well as some truths, pure and simple). The unions and social spending were indeed *seen* as the cause of the economic crisis that hit in every advanced society in the mid-seventies. As early as 1976 James Callaghan, the Labour prime minister of Britain, made a searing indictment of the policies that his own party had followed for a generation:

> We used to think that you could spend your way out of a recession, and increase employment by cutting taxes and boosting Government spending. I tell you in all candour that that option no longer exists, and that in so far as it ever did exist, it only worked on each occasion since the war by injecting a bigger dose of inflation into the economy, followed by a higher level of unemployment as the next step.

The problem is that the turn-down of growth and productivity in the mid-Seventies, which no one has satisfactorily explained, was clearly *not* the simple result of government spending and most certainly not of a redistribution of income and wealth (which did not take place in *any* welfare state). Take just two indices of how the causes of the economic crisis were not as the public, or even Callaghan, imagined them.

Between 1960 and 1973, according to OECD study documents, real public expenditure as a percentage of Gross Domestic Product (GDP) went up by 5 percent in the seven richest countries. Then, in two years, 1974 and 1975, there was another 5 percent increase. This rapid escalation, the evidence suggests, was not the cause, but the consequence of the

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crisis. As the OECD explained, "the sharp decline in GDP growth in 1974 and 1975 gave rise to an abrupt increase in public expenditure share which was not matched by as great an increase in the tax revenue share." This is the familiar vicious circle in which recession both cuts government revenue and increases outlays for unemployment, and it was particularly marked in the deep downturn that followed the OPEC price hike of 1974.

Second, Martin Neil Baily and Alok K. Chakrabarti have documented the fact that, in the United States, had productivity growth continued at the 1948–1965 rate after 1965, output in 1985 would have been 45 percent higher than it actually was.* If it had simply maintained the pace that prevailed from 1870 to 1965, production would have been 20 percent higher. *And there would have been no crisis of the welfare state.* No analyst I know of has persuasively accounted for the decline in productivity throughout the advanced world in the seventies—but then no one has seriously argued that government spending was "the" cause.

But few people read serious productivity and expenditure analyses made more than a decade after the onset of a crisis. They knew that European socialists and American liberals had theorized and often managed the postwar prosperity; that union bargaining power and social programs seemed to be increasing radically (even though we know that there was no redistribution of income and wealth); and that the lovely promises of a crisis-free, social democratic capitalism had suddenly been betrayed. So the socialists were thrown out of office, and where, as in Giscard's France, the right had the misfortune to be in power when the crisis hit, the people turned to the left.

If one equated the welfare state and Keynesian economy with socialism, then their crisis was a crisis of the socialist ideal itself. And that was exactly the mistake of many socialists and socialist parties.

In Crosland's *The Future of Socialism,* the German social democrats' Godesberg Program (1959) and countless other documents and manifestos of the fifties and early sixties, there was a euphoric overgeneralization about the enormous accomplishments of the welfare state (which still did more for the rank and file in the West than any other social-economic formation that has ever existed). In this perspective socialism was in effect defined as a capitalist society under socialist Keynesian control in which full employment and productivity growth financed increased wages, social programs, investment and profits. It was not understood that the welfare state was historically specific, the result, often unintended, of bitter struggles that created a mass consumption floor appropriate to a mass production economy in which blue-collar workers were the most politically powerful class. There was a rapid growth in trade during the Great Prosperity, primarily among the affluent economies, but, in the glory days, production remained national.

Changes in the World Economy

Then almost every single major determinant of this system began to change. Multinational corporations internationalized production and created a "global factory" such as had never existed before; "flexible" automated and computerized tools began to replace the huge machines "dedicated" to a single industrial purpose; blue-collar workers declined as a percentage of the labor force; professionals and technicians became more important and intermediate strata, socially liberal and economically conservative, made their appearance. I city only a few trends, but one example might illuminate this complex transition. In the fifties and sixties a wage hike was seen—so long as it did not exceed the pace of productivity—as a contribution to effective demand and eventually to the well-being of the nation itself. In the eighties a wage hike—even if within the limits of reduced productivity—was regularly denounced as a way of undermining national competitiveness. The new heroes of the Reagan-Thatcher mythology were entrepreneurs, not workers; business was celebrated as the selfless agency of productivity, labor

* Martin Neil Baily and Alok K. Chakrabarti, *Innovation and the Productivity Crisis* (Washington, D.C., Brookings Institution, 1988), p 1.

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denounced as the rearguard of narrow self-interest.

Keynesian social democracy and American liberalism had not realized that because of its economic power capital still had decisive influence. For a quarter of a century there was indeed a partial convergence of interest between sophisticated business and the socialist, labor, and American liberal movements. But when the corporations could no longer make their accustomed profits in the early seventies they began to get positively surly and by the early eighties they used their political-economic power, particularly in the United States and Britain, in a savage anti-union offensive and an attack on some gains of the welfare state.

Once the crisis of the welfare state struck, the conservatives had a political answer. They had said in the thirties that the fiscal, monetary, and social programs of the New Deal and Swedish socialism violated the eternal laws of economics. Now—after an extraordinary "lag" of forty years that strangely saw the greatest economic advance in history—those laws were finally taking their revenge. This is not the place to go into that hypothesis, rather silly on the face of it. What is pertinent is that the right had a coherent explanation of what had gone wrong and a program of action following from it, while the left was bewildered by the loss of some of its most cherished illusions.

But why had so many socialists in effect accepted welfare capitalism as the practical embodiment of their ideal? The answer leads all the way back to the nineteenth century, to a deep flaw in a socialist analysis that was also profound.

In an inspired insight, Marx and Engels had defined capitalism as a system of private socialization. In the organization of work, the creation of the world economy and everything else that it did, capital centralized, made economic life more and more interdependent, and moved from laissez-faire to monopoly, from entrepreneurs to managers, from the "nightwatchman state" to the government intervention of Bismarck and Lloyd George. Eventually, Marx wrote in the *Grundrisse*, the application of science to production would lead to a labor force in which the workers would simply be the "watchers and regulators" of miraculous machines.

This socialization was, however, private, unplanned, constantly running into the consumption limits of an economy in which the managers simultaneously increased productivity as if there were no tomorrow and fought to hold down the wages that would provide the effective demand for that soaring output. Eventually the system would lose its only excuse for being—the fact that it constantly expanded and thereby opened up the possibility, not simply of periodic crisis, but of a new kind of society.

Socialism? It would be the socialization of the already social but still private means of production, a democratic political movement that would impose humane priorities on this system of antisocial socialization. That analysis, particularly when refined by twentieth-century Marxists like Hilferding and Gramsci, predicted more than a century of economic development. It also provided the theoretical basis for a socialist movement that was to take the audacious step of seeing its revolutionary hopes incarnated in a reformist, gradualist trade union movement. There were those, like Ferdinand Lassalle, who wanted to move directly to the political seizure of power. Marx and Engels counseled a much more pragmatic tactic, which laid the basis for the greatest movement of social idealism in history.

What, exactly, did that delphic formula, the "socialization" of the means of production, mean? Marx and Engels regularly described it in libertarian, worker-control terms, often using the French syndicalist term, "association." But they also became very vague when it came to the future, not the least because they abominated German professors who developed elaborate blueprints for the good society while sitting in their studies. "Society," they said, would take over the already productive system. But what, exactly, did that mean?

In the 1860s and 1870s most socialists probably took it to refer to cooperatives or "national workshops" on the Louis Blanc model. By 1891 and the enormously influential Erfurt Program of the German Social Democracy it was clear that the gigantic factories of the new corporate capitalism could not be run

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as co-ops. "Socialization" now meant democratic state control of monopolies that remained monopolies. In the aftermath of World War I, the socialists had political power imposed upon them in a number of countries and discovered that there was not really political support for a revolutionary socialization of the economy that they were hard put to define.

Lenin understood some of these problems—even though he briefly proposed running a structure modeled on imperialist monopoly capitalism through the participatory democracy of the original Soviets—but Stalin cut the Gordian knot. Under his rule "socialization" meant centralized, dictatorial control of production and the modernization of a backward economy through super-exploitation of workers and peasants. In the West, when capitalism all but collapsed in 1929, most socialists did not know what to do.

The Swedish socialists, acting on the pre-Keynes "Keynesianism" of Gunnar Myrdal and Ernst Wigforss, actually carried out a deficit-financed recovery. Leon Blum, consciously imitating Roosevelt, tried the same strategy in France during the brief period of the Popular Front and failed, while Roosevelt himself, committed to conservative economics, improvised a welfare state he did not quite understand. "Keynesian" currents were also developing in the British Labour party and among unionists intrigued by calls for "planning."

In short, when the postwar period came and the Keynesian welfare state actually worked, it provided *the only definition of socialization that was specific and workable but, as we have seen, fallible*. When that formation began to unravel in the mid-seventies, there was, then, a crisis of socialism itself.

Yet it can be demonstrated that Marx and Engels's basic insight about capitalism as a system of irresponsible, antisocial socialization is truer today than it was a century ago. And the crisis of undemocratic socialization in the communist world clearly shows that no solutions are to be found in the past or present of those societies. The problem of socialism, then, remains as it has been for a good hundred years: How does one democratically and efficiently manage the already social means of production, East and West, North and South?

It is impossible even to begin to outline an answer to that question in a single essay. What I can do, however, is to sketch two concepts that are basic to the new socialism of the 1990s. They will function, not simply to assert bottom-up popular control over our social ingenuity but also to create an institutional structure that can effectively harness the powers of the new technology and work toward that humane end.

Global Socialism

From Marx to the present, socialists have proclaimed their fidelity to an international ideal. Now, however, internationalism is literally a matter of life and death for the very survival of socialism. Either the movement will define a new global politics or else it will go down in history as humankind's noblest illusion.

The environment is perhaps the most obvious single case in point. The problem is clearly international, for acid rain, the greenhouse effect, and the depletion of the ozone layer blithely ignore national borders. Either we will get control of the technology that creates these global effects or we will run the risk of rendering the biosphere uninhabitable. And to do that requires commitment to designing means of production that are truly social.

Taxes on poisonous substances, the standard remedy of free-market economists, are not enough. One cannot license corporations, public or private, or even cooperatives, to destroy the preconditions of life and then penalize them after the fact. It must be a central goal of the new socialism to create an environmentally responsible system of production within and among the nations in the first place. Publicly owned and worker-owned enterprises are most emphatically included under this rubric.

There is a corollary proposition that has to do with the social costs of production, private or public. One of the most effective indictments of capitalism was that this system constantly imposed many of the real costs of its operations upon innocent people in order to

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maximize profits, e.g., that the factory would spew noxious smoke over the surrounding countryside. But, as Alec Nove has pointed out, that problem will exist in any economy with large-scale production. Even if socialism is going to be decentralized—and that, we will see, is a critical value for the movement—there can be a collective egotism and irresponsibility of democratic units of production, not only of capitalist companies. This means that we are talking not merely of new forms of control over the old technology but of creating a new kind of technology that will not have these dangerous side-effects, whatever the character of the management.

These measures are critical if the ecosphere is to be protected. That same goal is one of the many reasons why the affluent economies must redefine their relation to the Third World in every way.

In 1988 environmentalists became alarmed because Brazil was destroying the Amazonian rain forest as part of a development scheme. Brazil's reaction to the proposals that it forgo the exploitation of natural wealth in the name of environmental responsibility has been less than enthusiastic. Why, the Brazilians want to know, should the North, the source of about 80 percent of global pollution, lecture nations of the South on these matters? Why should a country in which there is widespread hunger sacrifice itself in behalf of affluent economies based, among other things, on more than a century of environmental degradation?

That answer, though quite understandable, is frightening for those concerned with the future of the species. Therefore it is imperative that the North provide developmental alternatives that permit the Third World to respect the environment without having to perpetuate its poverty. And this leads to a much larger socialist concept of internationalism, one articulated in recent years by Michael Manley, Willy Brandt, and the late Olof Palme.

The world, they argued, is now locked, willy-nilly, in a global system of interdependence. There are no purely national solutions to problems, as the French Socialists learned in 1981–82 when they tried to stimulate their economy with a left-wing version of Keynesianism.

At the same time sophisticated business began to realize that the advanced economies were, to a degree, sharing in the misery of the Third World that resulted from the international debt crisis. Business understood that developing economies cutting their social spending and using a huge part of their export gains to service past loans were no longer good markets for northern goods. In 1982 when the possibility of Mexican bankruptcy revealed the depths of the problem, the United States stonewalled, demanding one hundred cents on the dollar. By 1985 then–Treasury Secretary James Baker grasped the self-defeating character of this policy. So he proposed a typically conservative alternative: If the debtor countries would follow proper capitalist rules, such as cutting social spending and consumption, the private banks would, with government encouragement, give them new money to finance development.

In the years that followed many of the Third World economies did indeed follow the cruel and antisocial rules of the International Monetary Fund—but they received little, or no, aid from private banks. In the not-too-distant future, there will unquestionably be new corporate initiatives to deal with this problem. They will have in common the fact that they are dedicated to maintaining the international order of domination and inferiority. Socialists must come up with proposals for North-South cooperation designed to destroy the global structure of inequality rather than to make it more efficient.

Global Challenge, the report of a Socialist International committee headed by Michael Manley, has spelled out the details of how a massive northern transfer of capital to the South might act to liberate the poor of the world. The trade unions, socialist parties, and people of the North must come to understand that, in reaching out in solidarity and decency to the suffering masses of the South, there is the possibility of a mighty impetus for prosperity in the North itself. During the thirties and after the Second World War, the left demonstrated that social justice within the various capitalist nations could be a locomotive

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of economic growth. Now that lesson has to be internationalized.

Economic Democracy

The second basic concept of a new socialism is the democratization of the economy.

But isn't that simply one more statement of an old-fashioned and quite vague ideal? In one sense, yes. But under the conditions of the new technology it is an innovative program for increasing both democracy and productivity. Computerized and automated production helped to undermine the foundations of the welfare state. That system, and its trade unionism above all, had been structured according to a nationally based, blue-collar, mass-production system. When new, "flexible" modes of industry developed, the social democratic and American liberal institutions were subject to (self-interested, unfair) attack as being overly rigid. "Japanese" management became the vogue.

These developments provided a corporate rationale for anti-union policies and for schemes to co-opt the unions when it was impossible to get rid of them. And yet this very same development could provide the basis for a quantum leap in worker and union power, with a new relevance to the idea of a democratic economy.

In her fascinating study, *In the Age of the Smart Machine,* Shoshana Zuboff points out how the actual operation of existing computerized enterprises opens up the possibility of "re-skilling" the labor force and undercutting the hierarchies central to managerial authoritarianism. The fact is, the new technology works much better if it is understood by those who use it instead of being seen as a mysterious "black box" that issues orders to obedient, ignorant machine tenders. But the notion of an increase in the knowledge and participation of the women and men on the shop floor also implies a certain down grading of some of the most cherished "prerogatives" of management.

Here, as in the case of world interdependence, a single development contains antagonistic futures. "Japanese" management aims at a manipulated communitarianism that preserves the basic authoritarian structure of production. A socialist commitment to democratizing the economic process would build on the new technology in order to alter the fundamental relations of power in the direction of working people—including clericals and even mid-level "executives"—and their communities.

Ultimately, that socialist transformation would result in an economy with three basic kinds of enterprises. In the short run, socialist parties and unions and the American left would seek approximations of that goal. Ideally, there would be nationally owned industries in those sectors that, because of their necessary scale, cannot be operated on a decentralized, face-to-face basis; co-operatives, which have been given a new lease on life by the emergence of a small-batch, computerized production which is best carried out in small shops; and small private businesses.

In each of these three economic structures the principle of worker management is critical. That is, nationalization does not here refer to a centralized, state-run company operated by technocrats responsible to the legislature or the executive. It means a board of directors with real powers over decisions about technology, the organization of work, investment, and the like, with decisive participation of workers' representatives. In the case of co-ops, the workers are the owners. In the private sector, there must be worker involvement at the decision-making level.

That does not, and can not, mean that the democratic enterprise is completely sovereign. Every unit of production must obviously obey environmental, health and safety restrictions that apply throughout the society; and if a particular company or co-op is extremely profitable, it cannot claim all of that surplus for the use of a single collectivity. For even if markets will function in areas where they do not allocate necessities or make life-and-death decisions—even if an innovative enterprise should be able to obtain rewards for its ingenuity—there are responsibilities to the society as a whole.

More broadly, it must be understood that the right of worker self-management is empty, and even perverse, when it functions within an intolerable economic context. It then becomes the right democratically to sacrifice the decision-

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makers to the imperatives of the national or international economy. So, for instance, it was hardly a great gain when the trade unionists of Eastern Air Lines got a significant number of seats on the board in return for significant contract concessions, but were then asked to endorse further cuts in their own compensation as their first exercise of power.

The point is, decentralized social ownership requires economy-wide planning to provide an environment in which the right to choose is truly meaningful. But there is a potential solution to that problem in the very notion of a democratic economy. It is not simply a proposal to end the alienation and powerlessness typical of the direct producers in a capitalist society. It is also a source of a tremendous new productivity that would lead, not to a growth in *Gross* National Product but to one in Net *Qualitative* Product, i.e. in an output that respects the ecosphere and pays all of its costs of production.

Space does not allow for a full explanation of how an internationalized, democratic economy could provide the resources for solving so many of the critical problems of North and South: to deal with cancerous urbanism, homelessness, the destruction of community, and numerous other imperative issues. Even if there were space, neither socialists nor anyone else have some blueprint to deal with the complex tragedies generated by the present order of things. "All" that is claimed here—and this is counterposed to the prevailing conservative wisdom about scarcity and limits—is that a socialist organization of the economy can produce new sources of wealth in such a way as to let us *begin* to solve those problems.

But then, there is another critically important aspect of life that has also been omitted from the analysis up to now: the noneconomic. It is significant that the most dynamic social movements of the past twenty-five years have been based on the struggles of women, minorities, environmentalists, peace activists, and the like—struggles that were not primarily focused on economic questions. It is also true, as some of the more advantaged participants in those movements often forgot, that the quality of life cannot be transformed unless we also solve the problems of the quantities of life. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. accomplished prodigies in eliminating juridical Jim Crow from the United States. Yet, as Dr. King understood, the right to eat in a once segregated restaurant is almost meaningless if you are poor or part of a despised underclass. The color of your skin no longer matters, but the color of your money does. So, too, with the ideal of genuine equality for women, respect for the environment, and creating alternatives to military violence throughout the world.

Still, it is important for socialists to make it clear that productivity and wealth creation are not an end in themselves. They are the means to a new civilization.

Let me take a moderate and achievable example of what this means. Socialists should certainly aim at reducing the working week to thirty hours in the foreseeable future. Indeed, the thirty-five-hour week is already the proclaimed goal of almost all of the major unions and Socialist parties in Europe, and that drive should be given a considerable impetus by the further unification of the Common Market in 1992. There will then be continental setting for one of the most primordial demands of labor: increased leisure. (The new Common Market should also offer new possibilities for the internationalist politics described earlier.)

If this means simply that the working day or week is cut, that will be an undeniable but limited gain. But if socialists are true to their vision, this incremental change opens up the opportunity to redefine the working life itself. The new technology does not require that people follow a yearly economic calendar. Its vaunted flexibility means that individuals might decide to take a year, or years, off; to delay entry into, or exit from, the labor force; to follow interests, passions, and hobbies of no great economic value, and so on. But that will happen only if society can liberate itself, not simply from the imperatives of capitalist production but from those of capitalist leisure as well.

That raises a larger issue. Socialists as diverse in their ideological origins as R.H. Tawney and Antonio Gramsci understood that a new and decent society could survive only if there were a new and decent ethic among the

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people. If there are marvelous legislative innovations and the venality and competitiveness of the old order persist, the future will be corrupted before it even begins. There is already a disturbing tendency within the existing welfare states, shrewdly analyzed by Fred Siegel in the Fall 1988 *Dissent,* to use social conquests, like health care and pensions for the aging, to support an individualistic, antisocial life style. The founding generation treats such programs with the respect that comes from having struggled for them, but those who come after—admittedly in a very capitalistic welfare state—do not have such concerns. They find them a convenience, not a trust.

How can the mores of an entire society change? Not easily. Changes in ethical standards arise out of actual experience but they can be affected by the way in which movements interpret those experiences and even, in some instances, by laws. Socialist moralizers, as Orwell described them, can sometimes come off as cranks. But that should not keep socialists from stressing the truly moral context of socialism.

The coalition of trade unionists, minorities, immigrants, feminists, environmentalists, students, and other groups that of necessity must be the basis of a pluralistic political movement in advanced society has certain common interests and it is important to state them. But if it is to succeed, not just in passing this or that law, but in beginning to change the very moral atmosphere of the society, it must be bound together by an ideal. The Scandinavian socialists have succeeded in this task to an extreme degree and conservatives in those countries often have values well to the left of liberal Democrats in the United States, such as solidarity with the Third World. I know that lessons from small, culturally and ethnically unified societies do not travel well, but then we must find the political equivalent of that Scandinavian accomplishment.

In the United States it is tragic—and perhaps not at all necessary—that proposals for universal social service are so often the work of militarists and anti-union governmental employers looking for cheap labor. If those huge and disabling flaws can be corrected, if there could be a real program for *social* service, it might offer one of the ways to deal with this problem.

Finally, let me return to the basic socialist argument. Even with all the problems I have insisted upon, it remains powerful and compelling.

If the prodigies of human creativity now transforming the structures of the globe take place under the aegis of the multinational corporations and governments dedicated to their interests, life will become more ingeniously bureaucratic and manipulative. The air we breathe will be at risk. There will be more new poor in advanced countries with prosperous minorities, precarious majorities, and a growing class of the marginalized. There will be more children dying in the Third World in order to maintain the old international order of injustice.

These judgments are not prophecies. They are simply the present writ large. The socialist alternative to these horrors is not guaranteed by a benign history or any other kind of providence and it is, as any socialist who has thought about the last hundred years must acknowledge, problematic even at the best. It is also the hope for freedom and justice in the next century.

There is, in short, no question as to whether the future will be radical. Our one world, our microbiology and photonics and superconductors have already settled that. What is at issue is whether this epochal transformation of the very conditions of human life shall be carried through by elites of whatever kind on behalf of their own purposes or whether men and women can, by being as radical as the work of their own hands and brains, finally seize control of their destiny. Will that ever happen in all of its fullness and perfection? I doubt it. Is it an ideal that can, and must, inspire people to the very practical approximations we can make of it? I think so. □

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Daniel Bell

THE THIRD TECHNOLOGICAL REVOLUTION

And Its Possible Socioeconomic Consequences

We are today on the rising slope of a third technological revolution. It is a rising slope, for we have passed from the plus-minus stage of invention and innovation into the crucial period of diffusion. The rates of diffusion will vary, depending upon the economic conditions and political stabilities of societies. Yet the phenomenon cannot be reversed, and its consequences may be even greater than the previous two technological revolutions that reshaped the West and now, with the spread of industrialization, other parts of the world as well.

NB: I make a distinction between a technological revolution and its socioeconomic consequences. The early phrase "the industrial revolution" obscures two different things: the introduction of steam power as a new form of energy and the creation of factories to apply that energy to machines for the production of goods. The reason for the distinction is that there is no necessary, determinate single path for the use of the new technologies. The ways in which technologies can be organized vary widely, and these are social decisions, which can be made in a conscious way. No one "voted in" the first industrial revolution—in the way that political revolutions, such as the French and the Russian Revolutions, were shaped by active minorities. The industrial revolution moved along the path of least resistance because it generated profits and provided goods at cheaper prices. Yet the social costs were rarely reckoned or dealt with. Today we have a greater awareness of the forces of change and the possible outcomes; and, given our values, we try to enact policies that will create different social matrices to encapsulate these changes and deal with the transitions they provoke.[1]

What I hope to do in this article is to identify the salient aspects of the "third technological revolution," sketch a number of social frameworks that may allow us to see how this technological revolution may proceed in the reorganization of basic structures, and describe the choices we may have.[2]

Three Technological Revolutions

Any dating or numbering is somewhat arbitrary, yet if we look at the nature of the technological changes and their consequences, we are justified, I believe, in speaking of three major technological revolutions in the Western world in modern times.

The first is the introduction of steam power, more than two hundred years ago, an innovation identified largely with the name of James Watt. The pleasant story goes that as a boy Watt saw the kettle boiling on his mother's hearth and the heavy iron top being raised by the rising steam, and he wondered what would happen if that steam could be enclosed within a chamber and used to push shafts and drives. Yet one cannot underestimate the extraordinary nature of that simple idea.

One can take, as a contrast, the visions of Leonardo da Vinci, who was not only a great painter but, as we know, a civil engineer, a

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military engineer, and a gifted inventor. In his *Notebooks,* da Vinci imagined an airplane, a submarine, a threshing machine, and refrigeration, and he drew the machines to embody these ideas with extraordinarily painstaking accuracy: the wheels, the gears, the shafts, and so on. Models of these have been made today, and they show how prescient he was. Yet, even with his astonishing imagination, da Vinci could not imagine the one necessary element to make these work: a source of continual and repeatable power strong enough to drive them. He could think of human muscle power, draft animal power, natural wind power, but these were insufficient. Steam provided a quantum jump in our ability to apply energy to machines.

With steam power we could achieve a variety of technological feats impossible before. One was to have steam pumps. England was an island bedded on coal, but one could not dig down very far because of the large pools of underground water, which hand pumps could not extract. With steam pumps, the water could be expelled and coal dug out to create an iron and steel industry. With steam, we could create railroads that could go faster (and longer) than any known animal, steamships that could sail faster, and more steadily, than any wind-driven sails, machines that could card and spin and thus create cloth faster than the nimble fingers of a trained woman. More important than these, the first technological revolution introduced, and made possible, a vast new conception in the creation of wealth: the idea of productivity, the simple proposition of greater output with less effort, as a result of investment. Prior to modern times, wealth had been gained largely by direct exploitation, such as slavery; or by tithes on work, such as in serfdom; or by plunder and conquest; or by direct political levies, such as tax farming, and so on. For the first time, there existed a peaceful means of generating wealth, a means that was not primarily a zero-sum game but one whereby all might benefit, albeit differentially. That has been the promise of the new methods of production. This is the decisive break with the modes of production of the past. This is the continuing promise of technology.

The second technological revolution, only a hundred years or so ago, can be identified with two innovations: electricity and chemistry. Electricity gives us a new, enhanced form of power that can be transmitted hundreds of miles, as steam cannot, thus permitting new kinds of decentralization that the bunching of machines in a factory, to minimize the loss of steam heat, could not. Electricity gives us a new source of light, which changes our rhythms of night and day. Electricity allows us to code messages on wires or to transform voice electric signals, so as to create telephone and radio. Chemistry, for the first time, allows us to create synthetics, from dyes to plastics, from fibers to vinyls, that are unknown in nature.

And now, the third technological revolution. If we think of the changes that are beginning to occur, we think, inevitably of things and the ways we seek to use them: computers, telecommunications, and the like. But to think in these terms is to confuse applications or instruments with some underlying processes that are the crucial understandings for this revolution, and only by identifying the relevant underlying processes can we begin to "track" the vast number of changes in socioeconomic and political structures that may take place. Four technological innovations underlie this new technological revolution, and I shall describe each briefly:

(1) *The change of all mechanical and electric and electromechanical systems to electronics.* The machines of industrial society were mechanical instruments, powered first by steam and later by electricity. Increasingly, electronic systems have taken over and replaced mechanical parts. A telephone system was basically a set of mechanical parts (e.g. a dial system) in which signals were converted into electricity. Today, the telephone is entirely electronic. Printing was a system in which mechanical type was applied, with inked surfaces, to paper; today, printing is electronic. So is television, with solid-state circuits. The changes mean a reduction in the large number of parts, and an incredible increase in the speed of transmission. In modern computers, we have speeds of nanoseconds, or one-billionth (10^{-9}) of a second (or thirty years of seconds, if one

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sought to add these up), and even picoseconds, or one-trillionth (10^{-12}) of a second, permitting "lightning" calculation of problems.

(2) *Miniaturization*. One of the most remarkable changes is the "shrinkage" of units that conduct electricity or switch electrical impulses. Our previous modes were vacuum tubes, each, as in the old-fashioned radios, about two or three inches high. The invention of the transistor is akin to the invention of steam power, for it represented a quantum change in the ability to manufacture microelectronic devices for the hundreds of different functions of control, regulation, direction, and memory that microprocessors perform. We had 4k (k = a thousand) bits on a chip, the size of a thin fingernail, then 32k, 64k, and now we begin to construct megabits, or a million binary digits, or bits, on a chip.

In the past two decades we have seen an exponential growth in components per chip, by a factor of one hundred per decade. Today the limit is almost a million components; by 1990 it will be about five million; and by the year 2000 between ten and one hundred million.

Today a tiny chip of silicon contains an electronic circuit consisting of hundreds of thousands of transistors and all the necessary interconnecting conductors, and it costs only a few dollars. The circuitry on that chip, now made by printed boards, is equivalent to about ten years' work by a person soldering discrete components onto that printed wiring board. A single chip can itself be a microcomputer with input/output processing capability and random-access memory and be, like the AT&T WE* 32100, smaller than an American dime.

(3) *Digitalization*. In the new technology information is represented by digits. Digits are numbers, discrete in their relation to one another, rather than continuous variables. A telephone, for example, was an analogue system, for sound is a wave. Through digital switching a telephone becomes converted to the use of binary systems. One sees this in sound recordings, as on musical discs. The third technological revolution involves the conversion of all previous systems into digital form.

(4) *Software*. Older computers had the instructions or operating systems wired into the machine, and one had to learn a programming language, such as Cobol or Fortran, or the more specialized languages such as Pascal or Lisp, to use the machine. Software, an independent program, frees the user to do various tasks quickly. In distributed processing the software directing the work of a particular computer terminal operates independently of software in other terminals or in the central processing unit. Micro or personal computers have specific software programs—for financial analysis or information data-base retrieval—that tailor the system to particular user needs and become, in the argot of the computer, "user-friendly."

Software—the basis of customization—is still a developing art. It takes a programmer about a year to produce a few thousand lines of code. In telecommunications, large electronic switching machines (to route the hundreds of thousands of calls onto different lines) use more than two million lines. Breaking the "bottleneck" of software programming is the key to the rapid spread of the personal computer into the small business and the home.

(One can point to a significant development that promises the enlargement and enhancement of the new technology: photonics. Photonics is the key technology for transmitting large amounts of digital information through laser and ultrapure glass or optical fibers. Combined, they provide a transmission capability that far exceeds the copper wire and radio. In laboratory experiments, the AT&T Bell laboratories set a "distance record" by transmitting 420 million bits per second over 125 miles without amplification, and two billion bits per second over eighty miles without amplification. The pulse rate can transmit the entire thirty-volume *Encyclopedia Britannica* in a few seconds. But these are still in the development stage, and we are concerned here with already proven technologies that are in the process of marketing and diffusion.)

The most crucial fact about the new technology is that it is not a separate domain (such as the label "high-tech" implies), but a set of changes that pervade all aspects of society and reorganize all older relationships.

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The industrial revolution produced an age of motors—something we take for granted. Motors are everywhere, from automobiles to boats to power tools and even household devices (such as electric toothbrushes and electric carving knives) that can run on fractional horsepower—motors of one-half and one-quarter horsepower. Similarly, in the coming decades, we shall be "pervaded" by computers—not just the large ones, but the "computer on a chip," the microcomputer, which will transform all our equipment and homes. For automobiles, appliances, tools, home computers and the like, microcomputers will operate with computing power of ten MIPS (millions of instructions per second) per computer.[3]

We can already see the shape of the manifold changes. The old distinctions in communication between telephone (voice), television (image), computer (data), and text (facsimile) have been broken down, physically interconnected by digital switching, and made compatible as a single unified set of teletransmissions. This is what my colleague Anthony Oettinger calls "compunications" and what Simon Nora and Hilary Minc, in their report to the president of France several years ago, called "télématique." The introduction of computer-aided design and simulation has revolutionized engineering and architectural practices. Computer-aided manufacturing and robotics are beginning to transform the production floor. Computers are now indispensable in record-keeping, inventory, scheduling, and other aspects of management information systems in business, firms, hospitals, universities, and any organization. Data-base and information-retrieval systems reshape analysis for decisions and intellectual work. The household is being transformed as digital devices begin to program and control household appliances and, in the newer home designs, all aspects of the household environment. Computers, linked to television screens, begin to change the way we communicate, make transactions, receive and apply information.

The intellectual task is how to "order" these changes in comprehensible ways, rather than just describing the multitude of changes, and thus to provide some basis of analysis rooted in sociological theory. What I intend to do, in the following sections, is to present a number of "social frameworks," or matrices, which may allow us to see how existing social structures come under pressure for change, and the ways in which such changes may occur. I repeat one caveat stated earlier: Technology does not determine social change; technology provides instrumentalities and potentialities. The ways that these are used are social choices. The frameworks that I sketch below, therefore, indicate the "areas" within which relevant changes may occur.

The Postindustrial Society

The postindustrial society is not a projection or extrapolation of existing trends in Western society; it is a new principle of social-technical organization and ways of life, just as the industrial system (e.g., factories) replaced an agrarian way of life. It is, first, a shift in the centrality of industrial production, as it was organized on the basis of standardization and mass production. This does not mean the disappearance of manufacturing or the production of goods; the production of food and products from the soil does not disappear from the Western world (in fact, more food is produced than ever before), but there is a significant change in the way food is produced, and, more significantly, in the number of persons engaged in agricultural production. But more than all these, the idea is a "logical construct," in order to see what is central to the new social forms, rather than an empirical description. Postindustrial developments do not replace previous social forms as "stages" of social development. They often coexist, as a palimpsest, on top of the others, thickening the complexity of society and the nature of social structure.

One can think of the world as divided into three kinds of social organization. One is preindustrial. These are primarily extractive industries: farming, mining, fishing, timber. This is still the lot of most of Africa, Latin America, and Southeast Asia, where 60 percent or more of the labor force is engaged in these activities. These are largely what I call "games against nature," subject to the vicissitudes of

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the weather, the exhaustion of the soils, the thinning out of forests, or the higher costs of the recovery of minerals and metals.

Similar sections of the world have been industrial, engaged in fabrication, the application of energy to machines for the mass production of goods. These have been the countries around the Atlantic littoral: those of Western Europe and the United States, and then the Soviet Union and Japan. Work, here, is a game against fabricated nature: the hitching of men to machines, the organized rhythmic pacing of work in a highly coordinated fashion.

The third type is postindustrial. These are activities that are primarily processing, control, and information. It is a social way of life that is, increasingly, a "game between persons." More important, there is a new principle of innovation, especially of knowledge and its relation to technology.

Let me describe some of the lineaments of the postindustrial society. It is, first, a society of services. In the United States today, more than 70 percent of the labor force is engaged in services. Yet "services" is inherently an ambiguous term and, in economic analysis, one without shape because it has been used primarily as a "residual" term.

In every society there is a high component of services. In preindustrial society, it is primarily domestic or personal service. In a country such as India, most persons with a middle-class income would have one or two servants, because many persons simply wish for a roof to sleep and a place to eat. (In England, until 1870, the largest single occupational class was that of domestic servants.)

In an industrial society services are those activities auxiliary to industry: utilities, transportation (including garages and repairs), finance, and real estate.

In a postindustrial society there is an expansion of new kinds of service. These are human services—education, health, social work, social services—and professional services—analysis and planning, design, programming, and the like. In the older conceptions of classical economics (including Marxism), services were thought of as inherently unproductive, since wealth was identified with goods, and lawyers and priests or barbers or waiters did not contribute to the national wealth. Yet surely education and health services contribute to the increased skills and strengths of a population, while professional services (such as linear programming in the organization of production, or new modes of layout of work and social interaction) contribute to the productivity of an enterprise and society. And the important fact is that the expansion of a postindustrial sector of a society requires the expansion of higher education and the education of many more in the population in abstract conceptual, technical, and alphanumeric skills.

In the United States today more than 30 percent of the labor force (of more than one hundred million persons) is professional, technical, and managerial, an amazing figure in social history. About 17 percent of the labor force does factory work (the industrial proletariat, in the older Marxian sense of the term), and it is likely that this will shrink to about 10 percent within a decade. If one thinks this is small, consider the fact that fewer than 4 percent of the labor force are farmers, producing a glut of food for the United States—as against 50 percent in 1900.

An equally important change is in the role of women. In 1950 the "typical" picture for 70 percent of the labor force was a husband at work and his wife and two children at home. Today that is true of only 15 percent of the labor force. Today more than 50 percent of all wives are working outside the home.

Any social change is an intersection of cultural attitudes with the ability to institutionalize those attitudes in market terms. The cultural attitudes regarding equal rights of women go back a hundred years. But the ability to institutionalize those sentiments in market terms goes back only to the past twenty-five or so years—with the expansion of postindustrial employments, particularly in the "quinary" sector of services (health, education, research) and then back into the "quaternary" areas (trade, finance, real estate). The reason is, broadly, that industrial work has been largely considered men's work (including the corporate sectors of management). Postindus-

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trial employments are open, in skills and capacities, to women.

The decisive change—what I call the axial principle of organization—is a change in the character of knowledge. Now, every human society has always existed on the basis of knowledge. The sources go far back, lost in the vistas of time, when the human animal was able, because of the voice box in the larynx, to take the sounds of communication made by all birds and animals, and to codify these into distinct vocables that could be combined, differentiated, and organized into complex meanings, and, through voice, to make intelligible signals that could be transmitted through an oral tradition. With the creation of alphabets we could take a few ideographic scratches and combine these into thousands of words that could be written in stylized forms, to be learned and read by others.

But what is radically new today is the codification of theoretical knowledge and its centrality for innovation, both of new knowledge and for economic goods and services. In his pathbreaking book, *Invention, Growth and Welfare: A Theoretical Treatment of Technological Change* (M.I.T. Press, 1969), William Nordhaus lays out an analytical framework in which, "for the purposes of economic analysis, it is important to distinguish two kinds of knowledge, general and technical. The distinction refers to the usefulness of knowledge in producing either more knowledge or more goods." On the higher level, there is general knowledge, such as the laws of nature, liberal arts, and language, knowledge "not particularly useful for the specialized problems of producing goods." And there is a second tier of technical knowledge, in which he includes computer programs and engineering formulas, which is useful in producing goods but not additional knowledge.

Whatever utility that distinction may have had for the measurement of inventions and the rate of technological change, it is increasingly diminished and even misleading in understanding the way innovation now increasingly proceeds with the new technology. Let us take the relation of technological invention to science in the major sectors of industrial society. If we look at the major industries that were developed then and that still carry over today—steel, electricity, telephone, radio, aviation—we can see that they are all "nineteenth-century" industries (though steel was begun in the eighteenth century by Darby with the invention of the coking process and aviation in the twentieth century by the Wright brothers) created by "talented tinkerers," men who were adroit with the nature of equipment, but who knew little about, or were indifferent to, the developments of science, and in particular the theoretical aspects taking place at the time.

Sir Henry Bessemer, who invented an oxidation process to reduce the impurities in molten metal and to produce stronger structure steel (and to win a prize from Louis Napoleon for a better cannon), knew little of the work of the metallurgist Henry Sorby on the properties of metals. Alexander Graham Bell, one of the inventors of the telephone, was originally a speech teacher who sought to transmit amplified voice on a wire in order to enable deaf people to hear better. Thomas Alva Edison, one of the great geniuses among inventors—he invented the long-lasting filament for the electric-light bulb, the phonograph, and the motion picture—was a mathematical illiterate who cared little about the work of Clerk Maxwell in uniting electricity and magnetism into a combined theoretical set of equations. (It was Maxwell who started us off, thus, on the search that continues today for the unification of all the forces that hold matter together in the universe.) When Edison became head of the U.S. Navy Consulting Board during World War I, he said that there ought to be someone on the board who knew some mathematics, in the event they encountered some problems that had numbers or equations, and the Navy hired a physicist; but since the Navy personnel slots had no designation at that time for a physicist, the man was paid as a chemist. This gives us some indication of the magnitudes of change from World War I to the present. Similarly, Guglielmo Marconi, who invented wireless communication, knew little of the work of Hertz on radio waves.

But all of that has now changed radically. Let me take three instances for dramatic effect:

In 1905 Albert Einstein, at age twenty-eight, wrote three papers for *Annalen der Physik*

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(plus his Ph.D. thesis on a new theoretical method for determining molecular radia and Avogadro's number), any one of which would have won him eponymous fame in the history of science. One paper was on the Brownian motion, which not only "proved" the "reality of molecules," but provided exact computations that demonstrated the correctness of Boltzmann's interpretation of thermodynamic laws. The second paper dealt with "special relativity" and described how the invariance of the velocity of light held in different moving frames of reference, thus showing the limiting nature of the Newtonian view of the universe, putting space and time into a single continuum and the pregnant equation $E = mc^2$, which exploded into the atomic age. And the third paper was on the so-called "photo-electric effect." In many respects, the latter paper has been of lesser importance in the arcane theoretical literature of physics (quoted less than the others), yet it has had the most extraordinary technological importance and, in 1922, was the basis for Einstein's Nobel Prize.

Einstein's paper on the photoelectric effect flouted the concepts of classical physics, which held that light (like sound) was a wave. The paper postulated, hypothetically, that light was a *quanta,* or a stream of discontinuous particles. This paper met with extraordinary resistance among experimental physicists, was not vindicated experimentally until a decade later, and was finally resolved theoretically by the complementary principle of wave-particle dualism. Yet the crucial point is that Einstein's paper was the starting point for much twentieth-century work in optics, from such simple things as we now see in the application of photoelectric effects, in breaking light beams, to the work of Charles Townes in creating lasers (an acronym for "light amplification stimulated by the emission of radiation"), Dennis Gabor on holography, and the development of photonics as the new frontier for telecommunications.

The second illustration is the revolution in solid-state physics. The contemporary conceptions of solid-state physics play no role, and to some extent are unthinkable, within the purview of classical physics. Our shifts in the conception of matter go back to the model of the hydrogen atom that Niels Bohr constructed in 1912, with the idea of the nucleus and the orbits of electrons around the nucleus. The basic step forward was taken in 1927 with the picture of the lattice structure of matter, by Felix Bloch, in which one could show how electrons, in their spins, "jumped" from orbit to orbit as energy is given off. These "pictures" of the structures of matter led to the discovery of the transistor at Bell Labs by Bardeen, Brittain, and Shockley in the late 1940s and to the revolution in solid-state technology that is the basis of modern-day electronics and the computer.

And, finally, an innovation of an entirely different sort, Alan Turing's mathematical paper in 1937, "On Computable Numbers," which is the fundamental basis for programming, storage, and the creation of the digital computer. In 1928, the great German mathematician David Hilbert, at the World Congress of Mathematics, had laid down three questions in order to see whether a complete formulization of mathematics was possible. He asked whether mathematics could be complete, consistent, and decidable. Two years later, in 1930, the Czech mathematician Kurt Gödel had produced his theorems, which showed that, given the problems of providing a complete and consistent set of axioms, if mathematics was complete it could not be consistent, and if consistent it could not be complete.

When Alan Turing wrote his paper, which showed that there could be a principle of decidability (whether in principle a problem was solvable or not) if the numbers were computable, he invented a tape that would be a "table of behavior" that could through binary rules compute any possible configuration of finite numbers. The idea of a computer goes back to the work of an earlier Cambridge mathematician, Charles Babbage, who in 1837 conceived of a "difference engine" that could mechanize any mechanical operation. What Turing's innovation did was utilize binary numbers (Boolean algebra) with internal program storage, to allow for the development of an automatic electronic digital computer. Thus, theory preceded artifice.*

* One should distinguish this innovation of Turing's from his later creation of the "Turing Machine problem": Could a human being distinguish an answer to any set of problems

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One consequence of this is that invention, or the "talented tinkerer," disappears from the horizon. There will always be innovations and changes in "things" that will create new products. But the basic point remains that fundamental innovations in theoretical knowledge—not just in physics, as in the illustrations above, but in biology (going back to the discovery of the double helix of the DNA molecule by Crick and Watson, and to the branching structure of molecular biology by Monod, Jacobs, and Lwoff) or in cognitive psychology (as the basis for expert inference systems)—become the new principle of innovation in society.

I said before that one has to distinguish technological changes (even when they are now not only in machine technology but in intellectual technology) from the more valuable changes in social structure. Changes in technology, as I have insisted, do not determine social changes; they pose problems that the political controllers of society have to deal with. It would take a book to begin to explore the many problems suggested by the possible changes we have seen. Some of these are explored in the following two sections on changes in infrastructure, or the social geography of societies, and changes in the nature of production systems. Let me briefly, however, with the more delimited framework of a postindustrial hypothesis, pose a number of questions.

1. The shrinkage of the traditional manufacturing sectors—augmented, in these instances, by the rising competition from Asia and the ease whereby the routinized, low-value-added production can be taken up by some of the Third World societies—raises the question whether Western societies (all or some) can reorganize their production to move toward the new "high-tech, high-value-added" kinds of specialized production, or whether they will be "headquarter economies" providing investment and financial services to the rest of the world.

2. The costs of transition. Can these be managed? And if so, by the "market," or by some kind of "industrial policy"?

3. The reorganization of an educational system to provide a greater degree of "alpha-numeric" fluency in larger portions of the population who would be employed in these postindustrial sectors.

4. The character of "work." If character is defined by work, then we shall see a society where "nature" is largely excluded and "things" are largely excluded within the experience of persons. If more and more individuals are in work situations that involve a "game between persons," clearly more and more questions of equity and "comparable worth" will arise. The nature of hierarchy in work may be increasingly questioned, and new modes of participation may be called for. All of these portend huge changes in the structures of organization from those we have seen in the older models of the army and the church, or the industrial-factory organization, which have been the structures of organization (if not domination) until now.

Societal Geography and Infrastructures

Historically every society has been tied together by three kinds of infrastructure: These have been the nodes and highways of trade and transactions, of the location of cities and the connections between peoples. The first has been transportation: rivers, roads, canals, and, in modern times, railroads, highways, and airplanes. The second is energy systems: hydropower, electricity grids, oil pipelines, gas pipelines, and the like. And the third has been communications: postal systems (which moved along highways), then telegraph (the first break in that linkage), telephone, radio, and now the entire panoply of new technological means from microwave to satellites.

The oldest system has been transportation. The breakdown between isolated segments of a society comes when roads are built to connect these, so that trade can commence. The location of human habitats has come with the crossing of roads or the merging of rivers and arms of lakes: traders stop with their wares, farmers bring their food, artisans settle down to provide services, and towns and cities develop.

whether given by another human being or by a "computer"?

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Within the system of transport, the most important has been water routes. They are the easiest means for carrying bulk items; waterways weave around natural obstacles; tides and currents provide means of additional motion. It is striking to realize that almost every major city in the world, in the last millennia (leaving aside the fortified hill towns that arose during the breakdown of commerce and provided a means of protection against marauders) is located on water: Rome on the Tiber, Paris on the Seine, London on the Thames, not to mention the great cities located on the oceans, seas, and great lakes.

If one looks at industrial societies, the location of cities and the hubs of production come from the interplay of water and resources. Consider a map of the United States and look at the north-central area of the country. In the Mesabi range of Minnesota there was iron ore; in the fields of southern Illinois and western Pennsylvania there was coal. And these were tied together by a Great Lakes and river-valley system that connected them with ports on the oceans: the lakes of Superior, Huron, Michigan, Ontario, and Erie, the St. Lawrence waterway through Canada reaching out to the Atlantic, the Erie Canal across New York reaching down the Hudson River, and the Ohio River wending its way down to the Mississippi and the Gulf of Mexico.

Given the iron ore and coal, one has a steel industry and from it an automobile industry, a machine-tool industry, a rubber industry, and the like. And given the water-transport system tying these together, we get the locational reasons for the great industrial heartland of the United States, the bands of cities along the lakes and rivers of Chicago, Detroit, Cleveland, Buffalo, and Pittsburgh. Thus the imprint of economic geography.

Now all this is changing, as industrial society begins to give way. Communication begins to replace transportation as the major node of connection between people and as the mode of transaction.

Water and natural resources become less important as locational factors for cities, particularly as, with the newer technology, the size of manufacturing plants begins to shrink. Proximity to universities and culture becomes more important as a locational factor. If we look at the major development of high-tech in the United States, we see that the four major concentrations respond to these elements: Silicon Valley, in relation to Stanford University and San Francisco; the circumferential Route 128 around Boston, in relation to M.I.T. and Harvard; Route 1 in New Jersey, from New Brunswick to Trenton, with Princeton University at its hub; and Minneapolis-St. Paul in Minnesota, clustering around the large state university and the Twin City metropolis.

What we see, equally, with communication networks becoming so cheap, is a great pull toward decentralization. In the past, central business districts concentrated the headquarters of large enterprises because of the huge "external economies" available through the bunching of auxiliary services. One could "walk across the street" and have easily available legal services, financial services, advertising services, printing and publishing, and the like. Today, with the increasing cheapness of communication and the high cost of land, density and the external economies become less critical. So we find that dozens of the major U.S. corporations, in the last decade or so, have moved their basic headquarters from New York to the suburban areas where land is cheaper, and transport to and from work easier: northeast to Fairfield County in Connecticut; north to Westchester County in New York; and west and southwest to Mercer County in New Jersey.

In Japan we see a major effort now under way, the Technopolis project, to create large, far-flung regional centers for the new computer and telecommunications industries. For status reasons, many corporations maintain a display building in New York or Tokyo; but the major managerial activities are now decentralized.

As geography is no longer the controller of costs, distance becomes a function not of space but of time; and the costs of time and rapidity of communication become the decisive variables. And, with the spread of mini- and microcomputers, the ability to "down-load" databases and memories, and to place these in

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the small computers (as well as give them access to the large mainframes) means there is less of a necessary relation to fixed sites in the location of work.

As with habitats, so with markets. What is a market? Again, it is a place where roads crossed and rivers merged and individuals settled down to buy and sell their wares. Markets were places. Perhaps no longer.

Take the Rotterdam spot market for oil. It was the place where tankers carrying surplus oil would come so that oil could be sold "on the spot." They came to Rotterdam because it was a large, protected port, close to the markets of Western Europe; it had large storage capacity; there was a concentration of brokers who would go around and make their deals. It is still called the Rotterdam spot market for oil, but it is no longer in Rotterdam. But if not in Rotterdam, where? Everywhere. It is a telex-and-radio system whereby brokers in different parts of the world can make their deals and redirect the ships on the high seas to different ports for the sales they have made. In effect, markets are no longer places but networks.

And this is true for most commodities, especially for capital and currency markets. Today one can get in "real time" quotations for dollars, D-marks, Swiss francs, yen, French francs, sterling, Italian lire, in Tokyo, Singapore, Hong Kong, Milan, Frankfurt, Paris, London, New York, Chicago, San Francisco, and money moves swiftly across national lines. Capital flows in response to differential interest rates or in reaction to news of political disturbances.

What we have here, clearly, are the nerves, nodes, and ganglia of a genuine international economy tied together in ways the world has never seen before. What this means—and I shall return to the question at the close of this article—is a widening of the arenas, the multiplication of the numbers of actors, and an increase in the velocity and volatility of transactions and exchanges. The crucial question is whether the older institutional structures are able to deal with this extraordinary volume of interactions.

The Social Organization of Production

The modern corporation—I take the United States as the model—is less than a hundred years old. Business, the exchange of goods and services, is as old as human civilization itself. But the modern corporation, as a social form to coordinate men, materials and markets for the mass production and mass consumption of goods, is an institution that has taken shape only in the past century.

There are three kinds of innovators who conjoined to create the modern industrial system. The greatest attention has been paid to those who have been the organizers of the production system itself: Eli Whitney, who created standardized forms and interchangeable parts in production; Frederick Taylor, who designed the measurement of work; and Henry Ford, who created the assembly line and mass production. (There were of course other forebears, and there were European counterparts: Siemens, Bedeaux, Renault, etc.)

Those who achieved the greatest notoriety were the capitalists, the men who by ruthless means put together the great enterprises: the Carnegies, the Rockefellers, Harriman, the men who initiated the large quasi-monopoly organizations, and the financiers, such as J. P. Morgan, who assembled the monies for the formation of such great corporations as U.S. Steel, General Electric, and the like.

But there was also a different social role, often unnoticed even in the history of business, played by men who, curiously, were probably just as important, and perhaps more so: the organizers of the corporate form, those who rationalized the system and gave it an ongoing structural continuity. I will discuss three individuals who symbolize the three crucial structural changes: one was Walter Teagle, of Standard Oil of New Jersey, who created vertical integration; another was Theodore N. Vail, who fashioned the American Telephone and Telegraph Co. and imposed the idea of a single uniform system; and the third was Alfred P. Sloan, of General Motors, who created the system of financial controls and budgetary accounting that still rules the corporate world today.

These three men created modern industrial

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capitalism. It is my thesis, implicit in this article and which can be stated only schematically here, that this system, marvelously adaptive to a mass-production society, is increasingly dysfunctional in today's postindustrial world.

Vertical integration, the control of all aspects of a product—in the case of Teagle, from oil in the ground, to shipping, refining, and distribution to industrial customers and retail outlets—was created for the clear reasons of economies of scale, reduction of transaction costs, the utilization of information within the entire process, and the control of prices, from raw materials to finished goods. What vertical integration did, as Alfred Chandler has pointed out in his book *The Visible Hand*, was to destroy "producer markets" within the chain of production and impose uniform controls. In the previous system, one of merchant capitalism, production was in the hands of independent artisans or small-business companies, and all of this was funneled through the matrix of the merchant capitalist, who ordered the goods he needed, or contracted production to the small workshop, and sold finished products to the customers. But the creation of large-scale, mass-produced, identical goods made vertical integration a functional necessity.

The idea of a single system arose when Vail, seeking to build a telephone utility, beheld the railroad system in the United States, where railroad systems grew "higgledy-piggledy," without plan, and often for financial reasons, to sell inflated stock. Franchises were obtained from corrupt legislatures or from congressional land grants, and the roads were built in sprawling ways. Before the advent of coast-to-coast air flight, if a traveler wanted to go from New York to the West Coast by train, he could not do so on a single system. He could take one of two competitive railroads from New York to Chicago, where he changed trains and then took one of three competitive systems to the Coast. (If one wished to ship a hog, or freight, it was not necessary to change trains. Animals or freight goods, unlike human beings, could not pick themselves up and move to another freight car; it was cheaper to shuttle the freight car onto different lines.) Even today there is no unified rational rail system in the United States.

Vail, in building a telephone network, decided that if there was to be efficient service between a person calling from any point in the United States to any other point, there would have to be a single set of "long lines" connecting all the local telephones to one another. Until the recent federal court decision which broke up the American Telephone and Telegraph Co., it was a unified, single system.

Alfred P. Sloan's innovations came about when he took over the sprawling General Motors from William C. Durant, a Wall Street speculator who had put together the different automobile companies (named for their early founders: Chevrolet, Olds, Cadillac, and the like) into a single firm, General Motors. But Durant had little talent for creating a rational structure. Alfred P. Sloan, the MIT-trained engineer who was installed as head of the company by the Du Pont interests (the largest block of stockholders until the courts forced them to divest their holdings about twenty-five years ago), installed unit cost accounting and financial controls with a single aim: to obtain a clear return on investment for the monies given to the different divisions. Durant never knew which of the companies was making money, and which not; he did not know whether it was cheaper to make his own steel or buy outside, make his own parts or buy outside. Sloan rationalized the company. His key innovation was a pricing system for the different lines of automobiles that would provide a 20 percent return on investment based on a stipulated capacity, a break-even point based on overhead and fixed costs, and a market share for the particular line of car.

Together, these innovations were the corporate principles of modern industrial capitalism. Why are they now dysfunctional?

In the case of production, the older standardized, routinized, low-value-added forms of production are being increasingly taken over by the newly industrializing societies, where cheap wages provide the crucial cost differential in competition. More than that, the newer technologies—particularly computer-aided design (CAD), numerical-control machine tools

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(NC), and computer-aided manufacturing (CAM)—now make possible *flexible*, shorter-run, batch productions that can be easily adapted to different kinds of markets, and which can be responsive to specialized products and customized demands.

One of the great success stories in this respect is Italy, in such an "old-fashioned" industry as textiles. The textile district of Prato—the group of towns in Central Italy in the provinces of Florence and Pistoia—was able to survive and flourish because it could adapt. As two MIT scholars have pointed out (relying, of course, on Italian studies), "Prato's success rests on two factors: a long-term shift from standard to fashionable fabrics and a corresponding reorganization of production from large integrated mills to technologically sophisticated shops specializing in various phases of production—a modern *systeme* Motte."[4]

But what holds true for textiles is true for a wide variety of industries as well. In steel, integrated production is now cumbersome and costly, and it is the minimills, with their specialized, flexible production, and the specialty steels that have become the basis for survival in the Western world. It is not, thus, deindustrialization, but a new form of industrialization, which is taking place.

In the case of telecommunications—to be brief—the breakdown of the old distinctions between telephone, computer, television, and facsimile (Xerox) means that new, highly differentiated systems—private branch exchanges, local area networks, "internal" communication networks between firms, international satellite communication—all emphasize diversity rather than uniformity, with many specialized systems rather than a single product such as the telephone.

In the case of Sloan's system of a return on investment through budgetary controls, the assumptions he made were those of a quasi monopoly or oligopoly in a "steady-state" market, and that kind of financial planning can scarcely adapt to a changing world where old product lines are breaking down (one need simply consider the old distinctions between banks, insurance companies, brokerage houses, credit firms, real estate investment, all of which become to some extent interchangeable under the rubric of financial-asset management), where substitutions of products provide price challenges, where market share and cash flow may be more important momentarily, and a long-term commitment necessary technologically, than the simple unit-cost accounting that Alfred Sloan introduced.

In effect, the world of the postindustrial society requires new modes of social organization, and these are only now being fashioned by the new entrepreneurs of the new technology.

The Question of Scale

The crucial question, as I have indicated, is how new social structures will be created in response to the different values of societies, to the new technological instruments of a postindustrial world. Beyond the structural frameworks I have tried to identify, there is one crucial variable that must be taken into account—the change in scale.

It is a cliché of our time that ours is an era of acceleration in the pace of change. I must confess that I do not understand what this actually means. If we seek to use this concept analytically, we find a lack of boundary and meaning. To speak of "change" is in itself meaningless, for the question remains: change of what? To say that "everything" changes is hardly illuminating. And if one speaks of a pace, or of an acceleration in pace, the words imply a metric—a unit of measurement. But what is being measured?

However, one can gain a certain perspective about what is happening by thinking of the concept of scale. A change in the scale of an institution is a change of form. Metaphorically, this goes back to Galileo's square-cube law: If you double the size of an object, you triple its volume. There is consequently a question of shape and proportion. A university with fifty thousand students may still be called by the same name it had thirty years before, with five thousand students, but the increase in numbers calls for a change in the institutional structure. And this is true of all social organizations.

What the revolutions in communication are doing is changing the scale of human activities.

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Given the nature of "real time" communication, we are for the first time forging an interdependent international economy with more and more characteristics of an unstable system in which changes in the magnitudes of some variables, or shocks and disturbances in some of the units, have immediate repercussions in all the others.

The management of scale has been one of the oldest problems in social institutions, whether it be the church, the army, or economic enterprise, let alone the political order. Societies have tended to function reasonably well when there is a congruence of scale between economic activities, social units and organization, and political and administrative control. But increasingly what is happening is a mismatch of scale. As I stated in an essay several years ago,[5] the national state has become too small for the big problems of life, and too big for the small problems. The national state, with its political policies, is increasingly ineffective in dealing with the tidal waves of the international economy (coordination through economic summitry is only a charade) and too big, when political decisions are concentrated in a bureaucratic center, for the diversity and initiative of the varied local and regional units under its control. To that extent, if there is a single overriding sociological problem in the postindustrial society—particularly in the management of transition—it is the management of scale. □

Notes

[1] There are important consequences for sociological theory in these distinctions. My division can be seen as corresponding to the Marxist distinction between "forces of production" (technology or technique) and the "social relations of production" (property, organization of work, etc.). Yet in Marxist theory the two are yoked into a single form, the "mode of production." Social change is seen as "holistic" changes from one form of production to another.

Yet this is patently not true. In *The Poverty of Philosophy*, Marx remarks that the hand mill or windmill gives us feudalism and the steam mill capitalism. But the technologies of wind and steam are compatible with many different kinds of social formation. To couple the two terms is to distort social analysis.

In my book *The Coming of Post-Industrial Society* (New York: Basic Books, 1976; original edition 1973), what I sought to do was to "de-couple" the two terms, and to treat them analytically, as two independent variables. Given that distinction, we can then see, along the axis of technology, societies that we can call preindustrial, industrial, and postindustrial. Along the axis of social relations, we can have feudal, capitalist, and state-collectivist societies. (I reserve the term "socialism" for more humane societies.) None of the social forms is complete or is a "total" description of a society. Any particular society would be a combination of several forms, depending on its own historical evolution. Yet if we treat these as "ideal types," we can make relevant comparisons, depending on which axis we use.

When one speaks of the "convergence" of societies, one would have to ask, along which axis? On the axis of technology, both the United States and the Soviet Union are industrial societies, as against, say, Indonesia and China, which are preindustrial. But along the axis of social relations, the Soviet Union and China are state-collectivist societies while the United States and Indonesia are capitalist.

[2] A simple methodological point: Most discussions of technological change have focused on a single, major item and then sought to trace the social effects. Thus we have had many studies of "The Social Effects of the Railroad," of radio, of the automobile, of aviation, etc. The problem with such a strategy is that it is increasingly difficult to understand the technological changes in terms of single major innovations, and even more difficult to trace the multiple effects. It is clearly quite different to trace the effects, say, of the plough on medieval agriculture or the stirrup on war, than the interacting ways that automobiles, trucks, railroads, ships, and airplanes change a transportation system. For this reason, I begin with social matrices and try to see how they may change with the introduction of the new technologies. (For a contrast with the older modes of analysis and the hazards of their contemporary use, see Lynn White, Jr., *Medieval Technology and Social Change* [Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1962] and W. F. Ogburn, *The Social Effects of Aviation* [Boston and New York: Houghton Mifflin, 1946].)

[3] For a convenient summary of these technologies, see *Information Technologies and Social Transformation*," The National Academy of Engineering (Washington D.C.: National Academy of Science, 1985).

[4] Michael J. Piore and Charles Sabel, *The Second Industrial Divide* (New York: Basic Books, 1984). Piore and Sabel cite the various studies of Gianni Lorenzi, Ezio Avigdor, Danielle Mazzonis, and others, and the OECD study of textile and clothing, 1983.

[5] "The Future World Disorders," reprinted in my book of essays, *The Winding Passage* (Cambridge, Mass.: Abt Books, 1980).

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Michael Walzer

THE CRITIC IN EXILE

Breyten Breytenbach & South Africa

This essay forms one of eleven in Michael Walzer's new book The Company of Critics.* *Two of the other essays have appeared in* Dissent, *one on Albert Camus (Fall 1984) and one on Antonio Gramsci (Fall 1988).*—I.H.

Since 1983 Breyten Breytenbach has been a naturalized French citizen, living in Paris, grateful for France's "tolerance of political dissidents," free to travel wherever he likes (though not to his homeland), free to write as he pleases, even "to castigate [his] adopted *patria* if the need arose. (As it would.)" Mostly, however, he has continued to castigate his native South Africa. He cannot live there; he is an exile or, as he now says, an emigré, but he is also the most brilliant of South African social critics. And the most self-conscious: He writes with extraordinary sharpness, intensity, and pain about the difficulty of writing from a distance—as he has had to do for most of his life—without daily contact, out of hearing of his own language. His language is Afrikaans, and he is said to be one of the finest poets ever to write in Afrikaans, though the greater number of his poems have been written in foreign countries, out of hearing. Perhaps poetry is easier than criticism, for the poet listens with his inner ear, while the critic depends upon an actual dialogue. "Of course, you do take your language with you wherever you go—but it is rather like carrying the bones of your ancestors with you in a bag: they are white with silence, they do not talk back."[1]

Exile is a hard place. But it may, even so, be a good place for social critics—especially for critics whose people have placed themselves, as Breytenbach believes of his own people, on the wrong side of history. In France, he says, he is freed from his roots, detribalized. Shouldn't he be able, then, to write about the Afrikaners and the state they have made with detachment and objectivity? It's not impossible, I suppose, though no one who has read very far in the literature of exile will think that those are its chief qualities. Nor are they the chief qualities of Breytenbach's books and essays. He is himself very restrained in describing the advantages that exile offers to the social critic. "Being in another country may broaden his horizon. He may identify with other intellectuals and . . . hit the international circuit. Or he may—through his exile and because of his politics—identify with . . . oppressed classes [throughout the world]. But that is likely to be a one-way identification. It is rather like a dog loving the moon" (*End Papers*, p. 75). Like lovers, critics require some response to their pleas of engagement and concern. To rage at a distant people, to throw daggers at a map: These are not sustaining activities.

No one in his right mind, Breytenbach concludes, would choose exile, would prefer "to live away from intimate communication with his own people." If he had a choice. If he

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could attend to his preferences. People don't leave South Africa, he says, to find a better climate or to make more money. They leave because of political repression; they choose exile over prison. In exile, they struggle to maintain the broken tie to the homeland, to resist the deadly silence—"at least as concerns the central problems of your country"—that is the exile's ultimate fate. Writing is one means of resistance, and I want to use Breytenbach's books to explore what the critic can say when he writes from exile and what kind of ties he can maintain to a people whose politics and society he has, more radically than any resident, rejected. Breytenbach is a special case, because he did go back to South Africa, not as a critic but as an underground militant, silently, with forged papers. Now, however, after seven years in prison, he seems (sometimes) resigned to his exile:

> Do you see yourself as French?
> I live in France.
> And South Africa? Do you think you'll ever return there?
> No. I could be rhetorical, smart-arsed, and say: *I am there*. But no. (*End Papers*, p. 228)

Exile and Clandestine Politics

Breytenbach's original departure was not politically motivated; he left South Africa when he was twenty for three years of wandering, odd jobs, writing, and painting. In 1962, he settled in Paris, more a bohemian expatriate than a political exile, and there he met and married a Vietnamese woman, Yolande Ngo Thi Hoang Lien. His first volume of poetry was published in South Africa in 1964; three more followed in the next six years, and the power of his writing was almost immediately recognized by his fellow Afrikaners, who seem ready, perhaps too ready, to value their poets—as if the nationalist cause were served by any genuinely poetic use of the national language, whatever the poems actually say. (This became a source of considerable anxiety for the poet later on.) But when Breytenbach wanted to return to South Africa and receive in person various literary prizes that had been awarded to him, his wife was refused a visa and he was threatened with arrest under the Immorality Act—for living with a woman of a different race. It was then, strictly speaking, that his exile began. Long opposed to apartheid, he now began to write about it and to construct a political position.

As a wandering poet (painter too) and a Parisian expatriate, Breytenbach had already made a decisive break with Afrikaner society—an artist's version of the philosopher's escape:

> To the best of my powers, I oppose
> my people: cave dwellers.[2]

But the more he wrote about politics, the more clear it became that he had not really escaped the cave; he carried with him a terrible burden of guilt and rage. In the work of the later sixties and early seventies, this is often expressed in passionate diatribe—sometimes contained within, sometimes exploding, sometimes just replacing his poetry. He doesn't write in the language of the sun when he denounces the cave dwellers. Despite the reiterated theme of his prose fantasy, *Om te vlieg* (*To Fly* [1971]), "white is dead," Breytenbach's deepest feelings are still engaged with his "whitish" Afrikaner countrymen, who are very much alive. His politics reflect this engagement, as do his repeated attempts, personal and political in motivation, to return to what he describes alternately as the land of death and the garden of paradise.

In 1973, the authorities relented (they would soon have reasons to regret that decision) and issued visas to Breytenbach and his wife for a ninety-day visit. He spent the time talking with family and friends and showing the country to his wife. But he also spoke at a conference on Afrikaner literature, drawing a large crowd of enthusiastic students, and denouncing the apartheid regime. Throughout his visit, he was shadowed by security agents and, in a series of bizarre interviews, invited to spy on exiled dissidents when he returned to Paris. Instead, he wrote *A Season in Paradise*, a strange and beautiful book, haunting poetry and brilliantly inventive prose, intimate memoir, travel diary, political argument, a song of love and hate for his country and its people. The book somehow survived the censorship and was published five years later in South Africa, in Afrikaans, with

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only minor deletions, at a time when Breytenbach himself was in prison.[3]

Back in Paris in the middle seventies, he had organized a small political grouping more or less parallel in orientation to the Black Consciousness movement of Steve Biko—and opposed to the official line of the African National Congress (ANC), which was dominated, Breytenbach thought, by the Communist party. Though he advocated a unitary and democratic state in which the black majority would come into its own, he thought it necessary for white militants to work independently among their own people. "Just as I respect the black man trying to improve the dispensation of his . . . people, just so, I believe, will the black man respect me only to the extent that I am prepared to work for the transformation of my community—and not if I attempt to tell him what he ought to do."[4] This is another example of what I call reiterative morality, and it is meant to contrast with the false universalism of the Communists, who were busy "papering over the real problems of cultural awareness" (and telling everybody, black and white, what to do). The Communists knew in detail the necessary course of the historical process and the necessary endpoint of the liberation movement. Breytenbach had ideas, mostly, about the immediate struggle. These were, however, Leninist ideas—"to regroup the progressive elements . . . into a revolutionary avant-garde"—and they pressed Breytenbach toward a politics as secretive and elitist as that of the party.

In 1975, he returned to South Africa under a false name, with forged documents, on a clandestine mission. Exactly what he was supposed to do there had not been very carefully thought out; nor was he trained for the secret life—though this hardly seems an excuse for the extraordinary ineptness of his conduct. His fellow Afrikaner André Brink has suggested that he actually sought arrest in order to expiate his guilt at the hands of his own people. I suspect that he was in headlong flight from his exile. Writing about apartheid from the safety of Paris must have seemed to him morally inadequate, inauthentic, risk free, and impotent. Breytenbach was one more critic reaching for heroism and unwilling, perhaps rightly, to make exile itself a heroic act. In any case, his tiny group had been penetrated by the South African police, and he was followed from his arrival in Johannesburg and arrested as he was leaving, along with most of the people he had managed to meet.

I shall not rehearse the details of his two trials and seven-year imprisonment (at the end of which he had something to teach prison reformers like Foucault about the value of humane detention).* More important here are his later reflections on clandestine political action. Though its protagonists try very hard to get inside the society they mean to change, clandestinity in politics is oddly similar to detachment in social criticism. Breytenbach describes the purity of thinking, heightened political consciousness, rigorous discipline, and intense loyalty of the band of secret militants. Like exile, clandestinity liberates the dedicated few from their parochial connections. "The very fact of having opted for [clandestine] action usually implies that one has established a certain distance between yourself and the traditional, overt political groupings in your country. You are thus less bound by the nationalist symptoms that these groups may manifest." Set loose from family and friends, from churches, parties, and mass movements, the militants can make their own way, guided only by their private understandings of truth and justice. But this is the romanticism of the secret life, and Breytenbach has a seamier story to tell:

> How the means corrupt the men, how [clandestine] groups become a law unto themselves, so infatuated with their own analysis, so turned in upon themselves, and so cornered when these analyses prove to be incorrect, that the only way out seems to be [more and more] vigorous forms

* There has been considerable controversy about Breytenbach's behavior at his first trial where, under pressure from his family and perhaps disoriented by months of solitary confinement, he appeared apologetic and compliant. For a hostile account, see Martin Garbus, *Traitors and Heroes: A Lawyer's Memoir* (New York: Atheneum, 1987), pp. 3–31. Breytenbach's own account can be found in *The True Confessions of an Albino Terrorist* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1985).

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> of terrorism. [Has this kind of politics ever been successful, he asks,] apart from, in some instances, making it possible for the clandestine activist to come to power? (*True Confessions*, pp. 81, 86)

Out of prison, Breytenbach renounced secret politics, criticized life in the clandestine cells (which he called "colonies of grave dwellers"—more restrictive, even, than the cave), confined his own activism to his writing. His view of apartheid was unchanged, but he had a new understanding of strategy and tactics. If you had to work in your own community, blacks among blacks, whites among whites, then you had also to attend to the actually existing consciousness of the community and not only to the heightened consciousness of your own small group. "Maybe," he wrote in 1983,

> we ought to settle for the slower processes; maybe we must, very paradoxically, extend our confidence to the people and whatever mass organizations the people may throw up. Ah, but that means that we have to accommodate the notion that our way . . . may be diluted or changed completely . . . since we shall be losing control over the evolution that we become part of. Isn't that what "power to the people" implies? (*True Confessions*, p. 86)

One might say that the most important mass organization thrown up by the Afrikaner people is the National party—and Breytenbach certainly does not mean to defer to the Nationalists. He is only arguing that intellectuals with their correct doctrines ought not to preempt the opposition to nationalism; they should participate in oppositional politics, say their piece, and not worry about losing control

Breytenbach is in any case an unlikely advocate of correct doctrines. His mind is too quick, critical, playful, ironic; his pen writes zigzag; his arguments are always provisional. "There is in fact no Truth," he told the Dutch PEN chapter a few months after his release from prison. "We are too fragile and volatile for that; we work with too many uncertainties. There is rather the continual shaping of something resembling, poorly, provisionally, 'truth.' " No doubt, many of the PEN members were looking for something more absolute from a man who had just emerged from one of the modernist versions of hell. From suffering comes certainty. But if this is a standard expectation, Breytenbach is committed to defeating it. He is bound, indeed, to the cause of black political power and ready (today) to recognize the ANC as the mass organization that best represents that cause. But the cause is not in any simple sense "correct," his bond is by no means unconditional; he is still a critic, though he no longer occupies a clear-cut ideological position. His view of his own people, of the Afrikaners, is even more "fragile and volatile." Love and hate, identification and rejection are raised to such a pitch of intensity that *A Season in Paradise* seems now, looking back, an almost gentle book (by any objective standard it isn't gentle at all). Breytenbach is living through, and writing about, the hardest experiences of the social critic: exile, alienation, and defeat. How does the critic "settle for the slower processes" when "slower" is infinitely slow? How does he sustain a tie to people, country, and culture when all three are hopelessly implicated in an abominable politics?

The Critic and His Tribe

One of the repeated themes of Breytenbach's writing since his release from prison is a simple rejection of his own identity: "I am not an Afrikaner." In *A Season in Paradise*, he had still used first-person pronouns, even in his harshest sentences. "We whiter ones," he wrote, "are the scum of a civilization based upon injustices." Now he insists that the injustices are built into the identity; to use the name is to make a political statement; to reject the name is to reject the politics. At one point, briefly, he seems to have thought it necessary to reject Afrikaans too, as if nothing could be said in that language that did not carry oppressive meanings. But any such view involves a perverse judgment of his own poetry, which clearly carries different meanings: anger, reproach, guilt, and, more rarely, hope for the future. Indeed, South Africa today is far closer than the America that Marcuse described in 1964 to a totalitarian society in which "language tends to coagulate into a . . .

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manipulated and indoctrinated universe."[5] But Afrikaans is nonetheless not Newspeak; it can still be put to liberating use (and to other uses too: it is "our lithe language of love"), and Breytenbach has in fact continued to use it, describing himself now, whimsically, as the only Afrikaans-writing French poet.

That isn't quite right either. Breytenbach's critical strategy—which reflects, I think, his deepest feelings—has been to forge a new identity, not Afrikaner, certainly not French (though, as he says, he "lives in France"), and not alienated and detached either, not yielding to the conditions of exile (though for some writers, he says, "exile can be a country to explore"). His new identity is South African. He describes himself again in *End Papers*—for the critic's identity, his self-naming, is an issue that must be settled if the critical enterprise is to move forward—as "a whitish Afrikaans-speaking South African African." And speaking as one of *them,* Breytenbach makes the claim that Camus made for his own people. "South African Whites are African; they are there [he is writing from Paris] to stay." But he adds a proviso that has no Camusian equivalent: the problem of their staying can only be solved "within a Black socio-cultural field of reference." Breytenbach is African in a way that Camus never was Algerian, and this identity is no mere construct, worked up for the critical occasion, a poetic invention. It is a real historical product; the Afrikaners have become one of the African tribes, hybrid like all the others; and Afrikaans is a creole language, seventeenth-century Dutch, radically simplified, with Malay and African additions—nothing like Camus's French. It is a language that the Afrikaners share with the coloreds (people of mixed race), who probably played the larger part in its development: a language that belongs now to Africa rather than to Europe and that invites its speakers to attempt a similar belonging.

Breytenbach's critique follows from his new identity. Apartheid, he argues, is "an effort to curb the forming of a South African nation—politically, economically, culturally, and therefore also racially—which should be one of the most normal things on earth given our interdependence and mutually hybrid origins." The effort succeeds, apartheid works, but only by cutting the Afrikaner off from the people of his own country and from "the South African in himself." It is *his* identity that is artificial, the creation of political willfulness, so that today "the tribal ethos of the Afrikaners consists of negation, suppression, withdrawal, and reaction." To say no to all that is not to abuse or reject oneself; it is more like self-knowledge than self-hate. And, similarly, to reject apartheid is not an act of treason, though it will be called that by the rulers of the state—who are themselves at war with the great majority of (what Breytenbach calls) their own people. "I'm not for one moment attempting to deny the South Africanness, the *Africanité* of those now ruling; I am, however, saying that the opposition is patriotic, coming from within, in the name of the healing of the South African nation."

A South African patriot, yes; but still with reference to his own tribe Breytenbach is marginal, dissident, subversive. In *A Season in Paradise* he acknowledges his responsibility and therefore his connection: "What exists in this country has been perpetrated in our—in my—name, in our—in my—language. Although, therefore, I am no one's delegate but my own and that of my fleas, I cannot and will not dissociate myself from this mess." But connection of this sort is a perpetual torture, and to dissociate oneself, to make the most of one's marginality, is a permanent temptation. The temptation takes many different forms, and Breytenbach, one feels, has worked his way through all of them. Writing in 1985, in the "End Notes" to his *End Papers* (a book that has to be read simultaneously from both ends), he describes the most common form of political escape: "Many of us projected our . . . local marginalism on to a romantic, potentially revolutionary 'elsewhere.' " This is a description, though only a partial one, of his own politics in the early 1970s in which Third World radicals play surrogates for himself and his comrades. Now he asserts what I take to be the central theme of his criticism, of his poetry too: "*The essential is not elsewhere.*" His claim for his own creative work: "Poetry is

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mainstream," makes the same point, perhaps a little desperately, since it seems to insist upon what is obviously (by all the rules of common sense) untrue. But this is Breytenbach's poetic truth. The poet-critic speaks to the heart of his people, provides "sense-making interpretations" of the social realities of his country. He cannot dissociate himself; he cannot choose some other, more suitable country (though he "lives in France"). If he is marginal to the world that apartheid has made, he nonetheless declares himself to be in the mainstream of his own history and his national culture.

The "mainstream" poet-critic has two tasks, Breytenbach argued in 1983: "He is the questioner and the implacable critic of the mores and attitudes and myths of his society . . . he is also the exponent of the aspirations of his people." Ten years earlier, when he wrote *A Season in Paradise,* Breytenbach managed to perform both these tasks, not easily, to be sure, not without radical shifts of emphasis and tone, but without overt self-contradiction. For he found in the Afrikaner community of the heartland, among farming families far away from the cities, aspirations that he could honestly expound: toward unity and harmony with the land and people of Africa. He found, or he thought he found, the South African in the Afrikaner, and he interpreted this as a kind of pre-Nationalist humanism, which a critic attuned to his people might still retrieve—though the time for retrieval was fast running out. Today the task remains but it isn't clear that time remains. Who is it, after all, who supports apartheid? Whose interests are served by the ideology of separation? Once one has finished a critique of Afrikaner "attitudes," is there anything left to hope for from Afrikaner "aspirations"? Critics of Breytenbach have compared him to Camus, unable to make the final break, to give up on his tribe, to recognize, as one of them writes, that "history has passed Afrikaner humanism by."[6]

Certainly, there have been Afrikaner humanists, and there also exists a tradition of *volkskritiek* within which Breytenbach may well belong, if only as an extreme case. *Volkskritiek* will only work, according to the earlier Afrikaner poet N. P. van Wyk Louw, if the critic is closely connected to his people and "prepared to share its shame."[7] I think that Breytenbach does in fact share the shame, willy-nilly, prepared or not. But it is clear from his writing since his imprisonment that he resents the sharing; perhaps he feels that the years in prison burned the shame out of him. Even more important, he now denies his own guilt—and repudiates every kind of guilt-ridden politics: "Guilt and all . . . [the] breast-beating sentimentalism engendered by guilt—these are out. Leave that to the judges and the preachers. Don't be a preacher or a judge." If he was once sentimental about (some of) his own tribe, he at least won't transfer the sentimentality to the tribes his own tribe oppresses. Does that make him a distanced and objective critic of all the African *volke,* liberated from the shame and guilt of personal membership? Not quite; for when he says, "I am not an Afrikaner," he says it to his fellow Afrikaners; he isn't trying to establish his credentials among the other tribes or with some international audience. He wants his own people to repeat the repudiation; he wants them to *become* Afrikaners according to a new understanding of the name.

Hanging in There

From the beginning of his political involvement, Breytenbach called himself a revolutionary; he did not believe that apartheid could be reformed, humanized, liberalized, or made more flexible. Small victories of that sort only strengthened the system as a whole. South Africa would not be a decent place until "the present power structures are broken down by destroying the very foundations on which they rest."[8] The *Sestigers,* the South African avant-garde of the sixties, only lent legitimacy to the regime, he insisted, by their literary protests. Reformers were secret supporters of apartheid. Breytenbach denounced them in a poem written in 1969, at the height of his own radical fervor—his muse in this case deserting him entirely:

> many-tongued arse-lickers of the bourgeois.

But this sort of thing was merely the ugly reflection of an internal struggle; the adjective and the noun of Breytenbach's identity (as it then was) were at war with one another:

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Afrikaner radical. Even a minimalist commitment to the adjective seemed to deny the seriousness of the noun.

A decade and a half later, Breytenbach expressed the dilemma in a prose more lively and inventive than his 1969 poem:

> I could argue—well, yes, I must blow them out of the bathtub, see, I'm trying to yeast Afrikaner sensibilities from within and therefore I start with the bread we break together, even if only via the basic complicity of the common mumbo-jumbo, I mean, language, I mean, *taal*. How else could I have a say-so? Ah, but how do I avoid the twisting and the bending, the kneeling and the back-stabbing, the compromises, the ethical corruption, in my attempts to "hang in there"? (*End Papers*, p. 205)

A serious writer trying to work *from within* (this double preposition is common in Breytenbach's essays) a people on the wrong side of history can hardly escape self-doubt. If he is censored or banned, how can he reach the men and women he needs to reach? And if he is uncensored, unbanned, isn't that a sign that he has compromised himself, that he is being used? "You will then have to decide whether your opposition, which you have adapted in order to survive, now permitted to exist, is not . . . making the totalitarian state stronger by giving it a lark mirror of internal flexibility." Breytenbach has made his own decision: his books, poems, essays are published in South Africa (I cannot find many signs of adaptation). Though he doesn't live there, he "hangs in there."

It is also a sign of "hanging in," I think, that Breytenbach is critical of black revolutionaries as well as of white reformers. I don't mean that he is looking now for some small piece of middle ground, equidistant from revolution and reform. The middle isn't, in his view, a matter of intellectual discovery; it is a difficult political creation. And he seems to believe, sometimes, that the time for creation is long gone. Consider the tenses of the verbs in the following lines: "A political 'middle ground' . . . could have been established only were there to be, by now, say two or three thousand White political prisoners."* As it is, whites, even white radicals, have made themselves irrelevant to revolutionary politics. So he says, sometimes; and yet he is himself involved, if not in revolutionary politics anymore, then in a politics of some sort, the politics of culture, Gramsci's war of position ("yeasting the sensibilities")—and he is determined to be involved on his own terms, responsible for his own actions. "Responsibility implies the freedom to be critical. Few positions are as demeaning as that of the 'fellow-traveller.' " And again, in the same essay, "Black on White," in which he asserts the irrelevancy of white radicalism: "I cannot allow my involvement to be decided by the acceptance or the rejection, the appreciation or the disregard, of my Black compatriots."

Camusian again: "I cannot act differently from what I am." He is one of the whitish South Africans, part of the problem, but nevertheless "there to stay," "a minority whose position will have to be accommodated beyond [the Black] takeover." The takeover seems to him inevitable, the accommodation not so—though he does seem convinced that black rule, whatever its character, will not produce a new apartheid, a mirror image of the present system. "It is conceivable," he wrote in 1983 in an appendix to his prison memoirs, "that the present totalitarian state will be replaced by one which may be totalitarian in a different way, and intolerant of alternative revolutionary schools of thought, more hegemonic [since it will have majority support] but minus the racism." It is not difficult to imagine the criticism the critic has reaped for that sentence. From the left, he is accused of red-baiting—as if "totalitarianism" is a word that must never be spoken by a leftist critic—while writers just to his right, *Sestigers*, reformers, liberals, worry that he is too eager

* This is what distinguishes Breytenbach's exile from Silone's: in fascist Italy, thousands of Silone's comrades were in prison—including, in 1929, his own brother. Breytenbach's brother, by contrast, is a high-ranking officer in the South African army. Silone had suffered a political defeat, but he could imagine a continuing struggle; for Breytenbach politics itself is deeply problematic.

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to rush into this different totalitarianism (as he once rushed into prison?). Perhaps he should insist more on the details of "accommodation": how will whites be protected in the new regime? It is clear enough that he wants them to be protected; he insists on their place in any future South African state. But he also insists that they can only claim their place in the course of a political struggle whose aim must be to undermine and subvert the place they now occupy. If there is no struggle, there is no claim: the Afrikaner will have to "trust his black nanny to hold him and not drop him."[9]

That last line (from a 1986 interview) is more a joke and a warning than an argument. As Camus understood, even people in the wrong have rights and can rightly lay claim to a secure future. But, Breytenbach argues, it would be a kind of indecency to focus on white rights and white security while the apartheid regime still stands and blacks are

> taken into custody, Shattered
> Stoned
> Hanged
> Lashed
> Used
> Tortured
> Crucified
> Interrogated
> Placed under house arrest
> Made to slave their guts out
> Banished to obscure islands till the end of their days.[10]

The critic must strive instead to create a new awareness among his own people of what is being done in their name. Not merely *for* them (as might have been said of the *pieds noirs* in Algeria, the largely passive beneficiaries of French dominion), but *by* them. The Afrikaners are the agents of their own mastery, and the task of the critic is to overmaster the master in their collective self-understanding, to create a new Afrikaner consciousness. But he won't try to do this with lies; he won't bind himself to the orthodoxies of the oppressed; he won't paint pretty pictures of a liberal and democratic future. In fact, the future is radically uncertain, and the longer the apartheid regime lasts, the more likely it is to be bloody. Perhaps a new oppression will follow upon the old. The old must be dismantled in any case. "There is no other way."

Criticism and Exile

Can one wage the Afrikaner war of position from Paris? Isn't Breytenbach, despite the sentimental insistence that he is "wedded forever to the cause of the South African people," the most extreme case of an alienated intellectual? The vector of all his contradictory impulses is exile, and in exile he finds himself at the end of his rope, a dangling man. We can place him in a series: first Marcuse and Foucault give up whatever hopes they may once have had for the working class—and for themselves as movement or party intellectuals, connected to the forces of social change. And then Breytenbach gives up whatever hopes he may once have had for the nation (as a replacement for the working class)—not only his own but the other too: Afrikaner and African alike fall victim to his bitter realism, and he too surrenders his ambition for an activist role. All the gods have failed; the critic is reconciled at last to a complete atheism. He lives in exile in Paris, where he is comfortable only because anyone can be comfortable in Paris, the city that refugees and expatriates claim as their own: "*La France aux Français; Paris est à nous!*"

This sketch captures something of Breytenbach's mood (I mean the mood of his writing), but it misses the commitment that lies, improbably, somewhere beyond atheism. Why does he sit in Paris and write *about South Africa?*

> To get through with it. To break through to clarity. Also to continue the struggle. I know power structures are practically immutable and when broken down they're more likely than not to be replaced by others which are as exclusive and manipulative. . . . But I must hang in there, hoping to help set off some alarms somewhere. . . . I know, don't I, that I need not believe or trust in the possibility of attaining the objective in order to keep moving. . . . Besides, continued commitment may just succeed in being perceived as a form of solidarity and support—by those in . . . transit areas and prisons who need to feel

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some human concern in order to survive. (*End Papers*, p..32)

He is kept alive as a critic by the very extremity of his situation. He can't fall silent, as Camus did, for his people are still the masters of their fate—which is also to say that there are policemen, torturers, oppressors, who act in his name, though he does what he can to distance himself: "I am not an Afrikaner." He can't live in South Africa; he can't give up the hope that his own South African tribe (the one whose language is his "heart-language") will find some way to make its peace with the other tribes. If he is disappointed again and again by his people's failure to produce a specifically Afrikaner resistance, he still can't walk away from them; he can't stop his anger even if he also can't acknowledge the hope that anger implies. Nor, again, can he sign up with the organized opponents of Afrikaner oppression, for though he supports their struggle, he does so without the illusions that they require from their supporters. Anyway, he is one of the whitish ones, painfully aware of "the problems of cultural awareness." In Breytenbach connection has become desperate. He knows that the critic can only be effective when he speaks "in his language, in his land," and there he sits at ease in Paris, talking French.[11] Nevertheless, he hasn't accepted his exile and substituted a more general and abstract commitment for the particular one that he can only barely sustain—"like a dog loving the moon." What else can a critic-in-exile do? "He must force himself to maintain a dialogue with the inside. . . . He must bark all along the borders." □

Notes

[1] Breyten Breytenbach, *End Papers: Essays, Letters, Articles of Faith, Workbook Notes* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1986), p. 74. Subsequent references are in the text.

[2] Quoted in Jack Cope, *The Adversary Within: Dissident Writers in Afrikaans* (Cape Town: David Philip, 1982), p. 168.

[3] Breyten Breytenbach, *A Season in Paradise*, trans. Rike Vaughan, intro. André Brink (London: Faber and Faber, 1980). I have taken many biographical details from Brink's introduction.

[4] Breytenbach, *Season in Paradise*, p. 154; Breytenbach's analysis of the ANC can be found in *The True Confessions of an Albino Terrorist* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1985), pp. 74–78.

[5] Herbert Marcuse, *One-Dimensional Man* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1966), p. 199.

[6] Neil Lazarus, "Longing, Radicalism, Sentimentality: Reflections on Breyten Breytenbach's *A Season in Paradise*," *Journal of Southern African Studies*, 12, no. 2 (April 1986):177.

[7] N. P. van Wyk Louw, *Lojale Verset*, in *Versamelde Prosa*, 1:166–68. I owe this reference to Hermann Giliomee.

[8] Quoted in Cope, *The Adversary Within*, p. 173.

[9] Quoted in Hermann Giliomee, "Apartheid and the Afrikaner Literary Tradition of 'Loyal Resistance,' " paper for a conference on South African politics and writing, Montpellier, France, May 1987, p. 27.

[10] Breyten Breytenbach, "breyten prays for himself," in *In Africa Even the Flies Are Happy*, trans. Denis Hirson (London: John Calder, 1978), p. 6.

[11] The phrase "*in jou taal, in jou land*" is from a speech Breytenbach gave at Stellenbosch University in April 1986—his only visit to South Africa after he was released from prison (he has been refused a visa ever since). The text can be found in *Die Suid-Afrikaan*, Fall 1986, p. 12.

Fund Drive Results

We are happy to report that our bi-annual fund drive, which we've been conducting over the past few months, has slightly exceeded our target amount. The sum of $91,266 has been pledged or contributed by readers, editors, and friends. This ensures our survival and another two years. *We thank all of you.*

—Eds.

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Lewis A. Coser

THE DEATH THROES OF WESTERN COMMUNISM

A Major Event in Recent European History

"Since the destruction of Nazi Germany," wrote Irving Howe and I thirty years ago in the concluding chapter of our history of the American Communist party, "Stalinism has been the only political movement able to seize the initiative on a world scale. . . . [I]t succeeded in appropriating most of the social dynamism of the post-war world, so that both as a system of power and as an ideology it soon came to be a dominant problem of our time." How times have changed! Though our characterization seems still correct for the period in which we wrote, it is completely inapplicable to the current scene. In fact, communism in Western Europe and most probably elsewhere, rather than being an inspiring messianic movement, has now become a grotesque relic. The Soviet mortgage on the political life of Western Europe has been lifted.

The near demise of communism in all of Western Europe is a historic fact that current commentators have not yet fully appreciated. It is, in my view, as significant a feature of contemporary history as the rise and fall of Nazism in the thirties and forties or the impact of the Russian Revolution in the West after 1917.

In a Europe in almost permanent crisis between the two World Wars, Stalinism provided a faith for millions not only in the traditional working class and among white collar workers but also among disaffected and alienated intellectuals. It provided a challenge to the existing state of affairs and made possible devotion to a nonreligious social ideal. Stalinism attracted not only the worst but also some of the best among the disaffected. It was a corrupt movement that also inspired actions of unquestionably heroic character. Especially those of us who, as "premature anti-Communists" fought the inroads of Stalinism in the thirties and later, must recognize that it succeeded in attracting thousands upon thousands of selfless militants who, to use Ignazio Silone's phrase, were "in search of comrades," even thought it also attracted cynical manipulators, power-intoxicated bureaucrats, and manipulative and ruthless commissars.

Stalinism did not gain majorities in the European working class in the interwar years, but it succeeded—in Weimar Germany, in France, in pre-Mussolini Italy—in recruiting significant minorities among the alienated. Some of the Stalinist recruits came from marginal lumpenproletarian strata, but others came from stable trade union backgrounds or from student and intellectual strata in which idealist devotion to the image of socialism mingled in various degrees with the perverse ambition of becoming Stalin's European "engineers of the human soul."

This is not the place to go into analytical detail about the differential impact of Stalinism at various periods and in various national societies. What needs to be retained is the fact that Stalinism in those years was a corrupt and deadly movement, which, all the same, managed to infuse vast numbers of members and fellow travelers with a large measure of devotion and readiness to sacrifice. Given its

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strictly hierarchical structure, Stalinism could attract the brutal callousness of the commissar as well as the sincere devotion of the rank-and-filer. It was indeed a corrupt and corrupting enterprise but—and it is absolutely indispensable to recognize this if its impact it to be assessed—it also managed to capture the idealism of large masses of people.

What was true for Stalinism between the wars is equally true of the variant of Stalinism that came to the fore after the end of World War II. Even though the communist parties of Western Europe did not engage in any anti-Nazi activities in occupied or still unoccupied Europe during the time of the Hitler-Stalin pact, they managed in its aftermath to become major and often dominant elements of the resistance movement. Their heroic deeds became legend and myth. After the war's end, European Communists had fully recaptured, and even surpassed, their prewar weight in the politics of the most West European countries. Blemishes and all, these parties appeared to millions of exhausted, famished, deprived people of Western Europe as capable of overcoming present misery through emulating the heroic deeds of the Red Army and the various communist undergrounds. They provided the only message of hope for those who had been progressively disillusioned by the postwar governments and the revived left parties of prewar origin.

Various radical political movements in the interwar years and after attempted to appeal to the discouraged, but only the Stalinists were able to argue that they acted in terms of ideals that were not just "castles in the air" but were incarnated in a concrete society, the Soviet Union. Stalinist militants, and to a considerable extent the rank-and-filers as well as the fellow travelers, completely identified with the Soviet Union. The Stalinist movement became a source of this-worldly messianic hope, and an incarnation of the tangible reality of a Soviet Union that had evolved, though with much blood and tears, into a planned, organized, and what seemed to be a joyful society. There, common effort had built a new order that had overcome the inheritance of hundreds of years of sloth and apathy, and had then managed to mobilize masses of Soviet citizens to turn back the tide of barbarism at the walls of Stalingrad.

A considerable proportion of those who succumbed to the communist myth harbored feelings of powerlessness and personal inadequacy that they tried to overcome by identifying with a Soviet power that seemed invincible. The weakened self sought security in the invincible body of the all powerful and omniscient party. The militants felt not only "in the know" when the higher-ups expounded the arcane mysteries of communist politics; *they knew that they knew,* that they participated in the precious aura of the all-knowing party.

Stalinism in Western Europe gained weight and power because it entered the political scene in opposition to other radical parties that had patently failed to deliver on their promise, be it in the interwar years or after liberation. The Stalinists, who came after, could profit from the decline of those who had previously dominated the radical scene. But while the old socialist parties had attempted to build up the self-consciousness, the sense of autonomous political power, of those who felt themselves to be disinherited, Stalinism thrived on the sense of impotence that had become widespread in Europe before as well as immediately after the Second World War. In addition, the communists attained significant popular gains especially in countries like Weimar Germany, France, Italy, and Spain, where the working classes had tasted defeat and humiliation. That is, they succeeded in attracting a mass following in those countries in which working-class organizations had failed, or where workers had never been considered full-fledged citizens. The typical Stalinist militant "knew" that the door to a better future was largely barred within his national polity. Only total devotion to the Soviet Union would assure a brighter tomorrow.

If this in bare outline is the phenomenology of the Stalinist movement before, during, and immediately after the Second World War, what accounts for the current disarray of Western European communism?

It would be simplistic to argue that the

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amazing economic recovery and growth of post–Marshall Plan economies was the root cause of the decline of communism in Western Europe. Economic development was a precondition but not a direct cause. What has happened in all of Western Europe, though in unequal degrees, is that economic prosperity has allowed the emergence of a welfare state. This new type of social order has succeeded in creating a sense of belongingness in large strata of the population who previously had suffered from the stigma of exclusion. It was not only the fact that the European worker now owned an automobile, a washing machine, a refrigerator, or that he could travel previously unheard-of distances during his (guaranteed) vacation, or that he could be sure that his children would have access to educational channels of mobility that had not existed before. Above all, he no longer felt demeaned by the solid middle-class citizens who used to dominate the social and political scene. In the mass society of the fifties and after, most social strata, most of the time, felt at home. When they were moved to engage in political actions, it was not because of existential despair but in terms of concrete grievance. To be sure, this was not the case among students and intellectuals, at least not to the same degree. That is probably why the appeal of Stalinism often continued longer among them than in the working class.

Generational differences are at least as important as class differences when it comes to explaining the demise of the communist parties of Western Europe. Older cohorts of workers there may still include some faithful, though ineffective, Stalinist types, but the young have turned away from the party in massive proportions. The children of the television age and the consumer society see no reason to regard the Soviet Union as a beacon of hope. They tend to see it as a backward society in which even rock and roll has hardly begun to make an impact. The membership statistics of all Western European communist parties show a uniformly constant process of aging. The party, which for decades claimed that it spoke for the young, that it would liberate youth from the yoke of the elders, has now largely become a party of the middle-aged and the elderly. The young look upon it as a somewhat comic relic of olden days.

In earlier years the various European communist parties succeeded in insulating devoted militants from the world of bourgeois society by surrounding them, so to speak, with an invisible wall that protected them from enemy contacts and alien ideas. Communist militants had to live *in* the bourgeois world, to be sure, but they were not supposed to be *of* that world. They were not sheltered from the world of the *vulgus* by physical removal like the monks of the Catholic Church. Theirs was an innerworldly mission, but while living in the alien world they were to be guided by an inner gyroscope that allowed them, rather like the Jesuits, to remain unperturbed by what they considered the currents of alien thought around them. The frequent adoption of new names by party militants symbolized this assumption of a new identity.

This insulating strategy became difficult to maintain during the Popular Front period when active communists were supposed to mingle with ordinary men and women and not to display their own esoteric ideological baggage in public. It became impossible to maintain an insulation in a welfare state that thrived on open access to people and ideas. The welfare state and the consumer society were not exactly ideal breeding grounds for communist "Jesuits."

With the change in age composition of the parties has come a change in the time perspective of their members. In the years of communist ascendancy, typical militants lived, so to say, in the future and tensely concentrated their political activities to help deliver mankind from the scourge of bourgeois domination. At present, however, potential recruits as well as active party militants are largely immersed in the here-and-now. Being present-oriented, they may at times be mobilized for concrete demands, but they can no longer be moved to forgo present satisfactions for future benefits. And when it comes to the here-and-now, other radical organizations may be better pragmatic instruments than the communist party.

Yet there is one European country, Italy,

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which seems to contradict what I have said. While all other Western communist parties have been in decline over the last several decades, the Italian CP is still a mass party with about two million members, even though it has lost votes in recent elections. It is by no means marginalized but is solidly ensconced in the political, social, and cultural scene. It controls major municipalities, regional governments, and infrastructural bodies, especially the strongest trade union federation. It is, all in all, an integral part of the socio-political life of Italy. The party has acquired power in all national political institutions except the national government. In some cities, for example in Bologna, it has run municipal affairs ever since 1945. Given these facts, should one not revise the description I have advanced above? I think not.

The Italian party has managed to survive in body only after losing its soul. It has nowadays none of the characteristics of a Leninist vanguard party. It is, in fact, simply a more effective social-democratic party than its competitors. This is truly a case of what Max Weber meant by the routinization of revolutionary charisma. The party controls book stores and newspapers, publishing houses, seminars, and special schools. There are few cooperatives, trade union locals, or local governments in which it is not represented. This means, of course, that it has fostered the rise of a bureaucracy utterly dependent on the party. These bureaucrats are in many instances pragmatic, passionless time-servers who can be trusted to perform their duties with honesty and with only a minimum of graft or nepotism. But to suggest that they could one day lead the masses in an insurrectionary march to power is sheer fantasy.

The *New York Times* for September 8, 1988 carried a story by Roberto Suro entitled "A Fairground Full of What's Called Communism" in which he described with great sensitivity a big country fair organized by the Communist party in a small Tuscan town. This year some five million people are expected to visit the fairgrounds in various places for a twenty-five day gathering. There are pep rallies, of course, and nostalgic appeals to the glorious past, but most of the visitors come to eat, flirt, dance, and drink. The official program carries not even one hammer-and-sickle emblem. The word "communism" is not used once. Politics turns up only in one corner, where an alternative life-style commune is trying to sell wooden toys. The rest of the exhibits are by commercial enterprises selling stylish consumer goods. There are forty bars and twenty-two restaurants where cooks from the Soviet Union, China, and the satellite countries display their culinary skills in competition with traditional Italian restaurants. The conclusion of Suro's article is worth quoting: "The crowd thickens later when the moon is high and white and the agenda is set by waiters, Ping Pong tournaments, disco dancing and stand-up comics. Italy's Communists may not know who they are, but many people think they know how to throw a party." Just imagine what Antonio Gramsci would have thought of that!

The transformation of the Italian party from the days of Gramsci to the present brings to mind a historical analogy: Time and time again the Chinese Empire was overrun by militant nomadic tribes from the Siberian North who imposed their yoke on a population inferior to them in the arts of war, though not in those of peace. Yet the Chinese had a secret weapon that served them well over the centuries. They succeeded, after a generation or two, in Sinifying the invaders, i.e., in making them accept Chinese ways and customs, so that they gradually became assimilated. The Chinese regained dominance through incorporation. In similar ways, Italian society has succeeded in domesticating the revolutionary invaders of the days of Gramsci. They have been absorbed in the rich institutional life of contemporary Italy and it is no longer inconceivable to think of a communist prime minister in a coalition government. What is inconceivable is the mobilization of the two million solid citizens that make up the party to mount the barricades.

In the decade or so after the fall of Mussolini one might have found that a high proportion of the party's militants had their quotidian lives anchored in Italian realities of the here-and-now, while their emotional life was largely invested in the distant holy land of the Soviets. This is emphatically no longer the case. While in the rest of Western Europe communist parties have become marginal even though, as

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in France or Spain, they may still have considerable influence among militant trade unionists, the Italian party has become a party like all others—eviscerated by being admitted into the house of power.

In the rest of Europe, the communist parties are by now negligible. This is so not only in England and Germany, but also in Sweden, Norway, Denmark, Austria, Belgium, and the Netherlands. In Spain the party is split into several independent factions. The French CP has lost all influences among intellectuals, lost control of many municipalities it once dominated, and managed to get only some 10 percent of the vote in recent elections. Communists are somewhat more influential in Finland and Greece, but this is due mainly to geography.

There is one fact that has not yet been sufficiently stressed when it comes to an assessment of the impact of the communist parties of the West for some six decades: The sheer tragic waste of the lives of millions who were diverted from their idealistic and even heroic dedication by the Stalinist commissars. Several generations of militants were deceived and their energies converted into the manipulated politics of the Comintern and its successors. Nothing like this has happened on the European scene since the horrid waste and deception by which Christian crusaders in the Middle Ages were made to serve the political and commercial aims of those who made the crusades into large-scale instruments of terror, rape and conquest. If I were asked to put into a sentence my evaluation of communism in the West I would say: It destroyed the idealistic dedication of millions. At the heart of this darkness was the physical destruction of millions in the Soviet Union and the moral destruction of other millions in the European West.

Let me now turn from the inner-European factors that have led to the decline of Western European communism to those developments in the Soviet Union that once fostered but now impede the efforts of Stalin and his successors to make Moscow into a third Rome. (It is too early to assess Gorbachev's impact among the remnants of Communist cadres.)

Beginning in the middle twenties, Stalin managed to consolidate his totalitarian grip at home while still fueling the myth of revolution abroad. Even during the monstrous show trials of the thirties and the collectivization of agriculture that cost millions of lives, Stalin managed to be widely portrayed in the West as the benevolent carrier of the hopes of mankind. Thousands of intellectuals and millions of ordinary men and women persisted in believing that Stalin represented a future that worked.

It is true that the majority of those who were attracted to the Communist parties during the thirties and later soon left them. In 1939, for example, only 3 to 4 percent of the members of the French Communist party were reported to have belonged for more than six years. Most members joined and left after a relatively brief stay. But a strong inner-party cadre stayed for very long periods, often through the rest of their lives. The devotion of these true believers compensated for the skin-deep involvement of most members and fellow travelers. Those who had undergone a true conversion clung to their faith with fanatical intensity, living in a mental universe so tightly organized that in good measure they frequently lost their sense of reality.

A friend who visited the Soviet Union in the late twenties in the company of some party militants told me that they had had a violent discussion on the train to Moscow about prostitution, the communists maintaining that prostitution had long come to an end in revolutionary Russia and my friend disputing this. As the visitors came to the lobby of their hotel they were accosted by several prostitutes. My friend there indicated to the others that he had won the argument, but they insisted he was totally mistaken. These young women were only friendly comrades volunteering to be their guides through the city.

In addition to the true believers the party also managed, especially during the days of the Popular Front, to attract fellow travelers who saw it as the only bulwark against advancing fascism. But such strategies became more difficult after the defeat of Nazism and fascism. Khrushchev's and Brezhnev's humdrum poli-

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tics had less of an international appeal than Stalin's. Goulash communism was not attractive in a Europe that was well fed.

The myth of the heroic revolutionary Soviet Union persisted for a long time, all evidence to the contrary notwithstanding. But the faith of the committed began to decline with the Soviet suppression of the Hungarian revolution and the revelations about the Gulag. There is no need here to mention the impact of the writings of Solzhenitsyn and other Russian adversaries of the regime of terror. Still, I do not believe that all these acts of defiance, or the Czech revolt, or the Polish resistance before and after the emergence of Solidarity, would have led to so massive a decline of Western European communism had it not been that structural changes in postwar European societies undermined receptivity to the Stalinist appeal. In this respect, I am prepared to defend the thesis that developments in the infrastructure of European societies proved more potent in destroying the Soviet myth than any superstructural development. European consumer culture, mass society, and the welfare state were more fundamental than even Khrushchev's speech or Gorbachev's revelations in killing European communism.

The demise of European communism is one of the most significant events of the second half of the twentieth century. It is also, and above all, a new opportunity for the socialist and democratic left. It may yet offer a second chance to that left, although most social movements are not granted second chances once they have muffed their original opportunities. But it is too early to tell if the European socialist left will prove capable of seizing that chance.

If the socialist parties of Europe continue on their present course, the chances of their attracting new members and voters that have now turned away from their prior communist allegiances are very small indeed. Only a renewed socialist movement that tempers realistic policies with a renewal of social idealism and utopian vision can hope to profit from the disillusionment of former CP members, followers and sympathizers. □

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Dennis Wrong

THE WANING OF THE COLD WAR

A Turning Point in Modern History?

Over forty years have passed since the beginnings of the conflict between the United States and the Soviet Union in the wake of the Second World War. By the standards of modern history, that is a fairly long time. We are often told that we live in a time of rapid social change and cautioned against taking for granted the permanence of anything. We are less often warned of the opposite error: a present-mindedness that ignores recurrent patterns of events within the framework of quite durable conditions. Forty years is a sufficiently long time and the world a sufficiently large and varied place for just about every possible hopeful or threatening event short of all-out war or total mutual disarmament to have occurred in the relations between the two superpowers. No one who, as they say, is not getting any younger can possibly have witnessed the hoopla over last year's summit meeting without having felt that he or she had seen it all at least several times before. Gorbachev's reforming spirit certainly has its unprecedented aspects, but so did Khrushchev's more than thirty years ago. Anyone with a memory does not need to be warned not to expect too much from these developments nor to be reminded that they fall short of ushering in universal peace.

Gorbachev's reformism has created reasonable expectations of far-reaching changes beyond a renewed and more lasting détente, even if visions of total nuclear disarmament are unrealistic. Yet preoccupation with hopeful possibilities within the Soviet Union should not distract attention from broader and less reversible changes in world politics that make a return to the cold war unlikely, even if Gorbachev were to be replaced by a stand-pat leader in the Brezhnev mold. Indeed, recognition of changes outside Soviet borders coinciding with economic decline within them has inspired Gorbachev to plot a new direction in foreign as well as domestic policy.

The relation between the United States and the Soviet Union increasingly becomes comparable to that between Britain and Germany before 1914. A better example might be relations during the same period between the liberal states of Western Europe and the Russian autocracy, for despite deep mutual suspicions these powers were not engaged in a competitive arms race. Today, a wary interest on the part of both the Soviet Union and the United States in maintaining the existing balance of power is taking the place not only of fears of a suicidal nuclear war but of apprehensions that the other side will make political and economic gains to the point where it becomes the dominant world power.

Such apprehensions still shape the outlook of hard-line anticommunists in the Republican party. However, it is significant that the prospect of a more promising détente appeared during the incumbency of the most rhetorically ferocious anticommunist administration since the start of the cold war. I am tempted to invoke the hackneyed phrase "this is no accident" in two quite different senses. First and most obviously, it has long been recognized that it is easier for a right-wing, stridently anticommunist Republican administration to win domestic support for improvements in relations with communist powers. Nixon's

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1972 accord with China is the classic example. Second, a candidate as addicted to bellicose anticommunist sloganeering as Reagan could probably not have been elected in the 1950s nor even the early 1960s: he would, like Goldwater, have frightened the voters too much.

It is not that Reagan's geniality led him to be perceived as not really meaning it. Rather, anticommunist oratory seemed less likely to lead to the ultimate disaster of nuclear war than in the past. The two events chiefly responsible for this perception of the world as a somewhat less dangerous place by the end of the 1970s were, it may be conjectured, improved relations with China and its post-Maoist reforms foreshadowing Gorbachev's reforms, on the one hand, and the falsification of the "domino theory" in Southeast Asia despite the American defeat in Vietnam, on the other.

The rhetoric of the Reagan administration was directed primarily against "the Soviets." This represents a marked change from the early cold war when the other side was often identified as "international communism," more extravagantly as "the international communist conspiracy," and most frequently as "communism." Critics complained that Reagan's "evil empire" remark was a throwback to the theologically tinged notion of "godless communism"; but they failed to observe that at least it referred to a bounded state (which *is* indeed an empire) rather than to a decentered secular ideology incorporating many "modern" beliefs and assumptions. Today, even the most ardent supporters of the continuation of the cold war are likely to define the enemy as "Soviet expansionism" rather than as "communism." When hard-liners invoke the Russian past to justify their rejection of détente, one is moved to wonder: "Whatever happened to *communism*?"

More and more, "communism" has come primarily to connote the complex of practices and beliefs that account for American ideological disapproval of the Soviet Union: its rigid authoritarian government, its lack of religious and cultural freedom, its inefficient, overmilitarized economy, its cult of Lenin and the Revolution. These are what "communism" now suggests rather than an ideological movement in tune with deep-seated world historical trends that also embodies utopian ideals.

Yet, at the end of the Second World War, it was identification with the dynamism of such a movement that made the Soviet Union, despite its material and military weaknesses, seem such a uniquely formidable adversary. The Russia of the Czars possessed a messianism of its own, envisaging Moscow as a third Rome destined to convert the world to a purer Christianity. There are unmistakable continuities between that sense of mission and the postrevolutionary ideological thrust of Soviet communism. But the messianism of Holy Russia had an ingrown, archaic, pre-Enlightenment ring while the secular utopianism of communism was futuristic and material as well as spiritual in its appeal. Despite its religious overtones, the expansionism of Czarist Russia could hardly match the universalist appeal of communism.

Knowledgeable anticommunists have, accordingly, always criticized those who have placed their main stress on the continuities between the foreign policies of Imperial Russia and the Soviet Union, insisting instead on the unprecedented worldwide potency of Marxist-Leninist ideology. George Kennan, author of the "containment" doctrine that became the basis of American foreign policy, and James Burnham, major creator of the rival doctrine urging the defeat of Soviet communism through the "liberation" of satellite nations, both regarded the fusion of military strength and ideological fervor as the essence of the Soviet threat. The ideology was seen as inspiring the Soviet leaders to fierce engagement in what Burnham called "the struggle for the world," providing a political weapon with which to win international popular support. Today Soviet military strength is greater than ever, but the universalist appeal of communism has almost totally dissipated. Nor is it likely to be revived, whatever the fate of Gorbachev's reforms.

The cold war began after the defeat of Germany brought Soviet armies into the center of Europe. In the Far East too, especially after the Communists had won the Chinese civil war,

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two rival blocs confronted one another. Full-scale war broke out in Korea, one of several divided countries. The long, drawn-out war in Vietnam can also be considered an aftermath of the earlier wartime destruction of established states, for it took place in a region that had been conquered by Japan and was later, like Korea and Germany, divided between communist and noncommunist regimes.

If successful containment of Soviet expansion is seen as the measure of victory, the Western powers achieved an unbroken series of triumphs in Europe—from the Marshall Plan, the Italian elections, and the Berlin blockade in the late 1940s to the installation of intermediate nuclear missiles in the early 1980s. The West could be regarded as having "won" the cold war in Europe by the early 1950s, at the very latest by 1961, when the East Germans built the Wall. In the Far East the record was more mixed: the communist takeover of China, the military stalemate in Korea, the total U.S. political and military defeat in Vietnam, the successful utilization by the United States of the split between the Soviet Union and China in order to establish friendly relations with China after nearly a quarter of a century of enmity. The communist victory in China in 1949 probably had the most devastating impact on American politics and national self-confidence during the entire cold war. Far more alarming, if less humbling, than the lost Vietnam War because of its ominous geopolitical implications, it was considerably responsible for the rise of McCarthyism and for the elevation of communism into a force perceived as more menacing than even the new superpower status attained by the Soviet Union.

The projection of Soviet power beyond its territorial borders manifested itself in the shape of powerful Communist parties in the West. The French Communist party participated in several postwar governments and in 1947 posed a threat to the Marshall Plan through strikes by trade unions under its control. Well into the 1970s it continued to win the votes of nearly a third of the French electorate. The Italian Communist party appeared to be on the verge of winning the 1949 general election and still remains the largest Communist party in the noncommunist world. There was a general expectation that the Spanish CP would become the strongest party in Spain at the end of the Franco dictatorship. In 1975 Henry Kissinger regarded a communist regime in Portugal as inevitable after the overthrow of its right-wing dictatorship. In the Middle East throughout the 1950s and 1960s fears were widely expressed that the entire region would soon fall under Soviet domination. I remember appearing on a television panel in Canada to debate the Eisenhower administration's 1958 intervention in Lebanon with a *National Review* conservative—Willmoore Kendall, William Buckley's mentor at Yale—who insisted that "Arab nationalism" as represented by Nasser was just "a stalking horse for communism." In the 1950s, even India and Japan were not considered immune to falling under communist control.

All this has utterly changed. The French communists now win just over ten percent of the vote. The Italian Communist party has for a long time been independent of Moscow, even supporting Italian membership in NATO; it still wins a third of the votes, but it too has been declining in the face of competition from the smaller Socialist party. The Spanish and Portuguese CPs have been reduced to minor fringe parties. The Middle East remains in turmoil, but no major country in the region is a plausible candidate for Sovietization on the East European model, nor can Islamic fundamentalism be considered any kind of "vanguard" for communism. And even the most monomaniacal cold war alarmists do not regard India and Japan as vulnerable to communist subversion.

I have been confining my attention to areas where the cold war was considered most acute several decades ago. But the waning of belief in communism and the loosening of Soviet control have also been visible in Eastern Europe for some time.

The drastic decline in the fortunes of world communism as a political force is still insufficiently recognized by many moderate politicians and journalists, let alone by right-wing ideologues. Ever since containment became the policy of the United States, George Kennan has insisted that he meant it primarily in political rather than military terms. The

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entire emphasis on the cold war as an ideological struggle implied such a view, as opposed to traditional balance-of-power strategic considerations. Recently Kennan declared in an interview: "In 1947, containment was devised against the political threat of international communism under Stalin's control, especially the Communist parties in France and Italy. Those parties are in no sense a danger today. In short, the notion of containment is today irrelevant."

But there has been another theater of the cold war, outside of Europe though partially overlapping the original areas of postwar confrontation in East Asia. I refer to the Third World: the economically undeveloped and politically unstable regions of Africa, Asia, and Latin America. As early as the 1950s several farsighted observers—George Lichtheim for one—argued that the East-West opposition in Europe was essentially a sideshow to the larger, more consequential conflict over which system, totalitarian communism or liberal democracy, would achieve the modernization of the backward parts of the globe. In the 1960s many liberals and some socialists became persuaded that only revolutionary one-party regimes firmly committed to modernization could overcome the traditionalism and corruption that posed insuperable obstacles to successful modernization. Few of those arguing this view were in any sense supporters of the Soviet Union, but at least with regard to the Third World they did tend to endow communist totalitarianism with an aura of both desirability and historical inevitability.

Events have rendered the whole argument obsolete today. Of greatest importance has been the discovery after the final defeat of Maoism that China had made virtually no economic progress at all since the Revolution, failing even to eliminate disastrous famines, as the Maoists had often boasted. The economic failures of Cuba, North Korea, Vietnam, and, more recently, Nicaragua have also thrown into question the compatibility of Marxist-Leninist regimes and stable economic growth. On the other hand, there have been some striking capitalist successes in the Third World that stand in marked contrast to the communist failures. The modernization achieved by South Korea and Taiwan, Hong Kong and Singapore, under capitalist economies free from control by rickety authoritarian governments has repeated the earlier Japanese experience and falsified the widespread assumption that "state socialism" was the prerequisite for economic development in the Third World. The ultra-egalitarian Maoist versions of communism that were popular in the 1960s, carried to horrific extremes in Cambodia, revealed a distaste for modernization itself as an essentially Western phenomenon—a distaste shared with anti-Western nativist movements of the quite distant past as well as with such present regimes as Khomeini's Shiite theocracy in Iran.

Communism, in short, no longer rides the wave of what used to be called the "revolution of rising expectations." It has lost much of its appeal to Third World elites as a mobilizing ideology mandating a forced-march industrialization. The specter of communism not only no longer haunts Europe; it is also ceasing to haunt the underdeveloped nations.

None of this means that there will be no new communist regimes in the Third World. The Leninist revolutionary party is an authentic invention of the twentieth century, designed expressly to win state power under conditions of civil conflict and mass discontent. When such "revolutionary situations" occur, the party as a combat group possesses real advantages in the struggle for power. At present, there are a number of small countries and a few larger ones with conditions favorable to Leninist parties. El Salvador, Haiti, Peru, the Philippines, and several African nations spring to mind.

In addition to their ideological and organizational assets, Leninist parties lay claim to a "special relationship" with the Soviet Union. Their ties and allegiance enable them to call on it for economic aid and military protection—often, especially in Latin America, from feared intervention by the United States—which their domestic rivals cannot match. Cuba is the most extreme case, but is somewhat exceptional in that ever since the missile crisis there has been a certain reciprocity with the Soviet Union in services exchanged. The Sandinistas apparently

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tried to follow the same route, but here the Soviet Union has been more wary in its commitments.

The Soviet Union may, in short, find itself burdened with unwelcome client states in the Third World. Yet it cannot simply tell Fidel Castro or Colonel Mengistu of Ethiopia or the Sandinistas to go away without impairing its prestige as a superpower. If Marxist-Leninist parties and regimes can use the potential support of the Soviet Union as a trump card in domestic and regional rivalries, this is no more than the mirror image of what has happened often enough on the other side. Right-wing dictators, corrupt generals, and traditional ruling elites have, since the earliest years of the cold war, often proclaimed their determination to resist communism in order to win American support. From Chiang Kai-Shek to General Noriega this has been a source of temptation to the United States, often followed by acute embarrassment.

Nor should it be forgotten that there are Leninist parties in the Third World entirely independent of the Kremlin. At the time of the Cultural Revolution in China, parties were formed all over the world that looked to Beijing rather than to Moscow. Today, *Sendero Luminoso* in Peru is a Maoist party hostile both to the Soviet Union and to the present leadership of China. A prolongation of the Gorbachev era may witness an increase in the number of such unattached Leninist or Maoist revolutionary movements. Their successes or failures cannot be equated with gains or losses by the superpowers.

These considerations contradict the habitual assumption of conservative and neoconservative anticommunists that Marxist-Leninist advances in the Third World represent unambiguous victories for the Soviet Union in a continuing cold war. Marxist-Leninist movements, in this view are seen as created and directed by Moscow as steps toward world domination. The most crude and even paranoid expression of this outlook was the claim that if the Sandinistas were not overthrown we would shortly have to confront "the Soviets" along the Rio Grande, a claim voiced not only by Oliver North but by Ronald Reagan.

Let me, however, try to give the Reagan administration its due: Events in the late 1970s did lend some plausibility to the rooted ideological predispositions of right-wing cold war militants. The Soviet invasion of Afghanistan was the most important such event, suggesting that "Soviet expansionism" might once again be on the march. The massive Soviet arms buildup during the Brezhnev years helped strengthen such fears. The United States responded with increased military spending that began during the Carter administration. The Soviet armies bogged down in Afghanistan and the United States aided the resistance from Pakistan, a policy also initiated by the Carter administration.

Events elsewhere in the Third World looked even more ominous and intractable. In the twenty-six years between the Chinese Revolution and 1975, only one nation—Cuba in 1959—passed under communist rule. Then in a mere six years, between 1975 and 1980, all three Indochinese nations, Angola, Mozambique and Ethiopia in Africa, South Yemen and Afghanistan in the Middle East, and Nicaragua in Central America acquired Marxist-Leninist regimes. With the exception of Indochina, where communism triumphed as a result of the lost Vietnam War, all of these were thinly populated, extremely poor, for the most part small, and strategically unimportant. Nevertheless, there appeared to be a pattern, attributable to some combination of Soviet intervention, American passivity resulting from defeat in Vietnam, illusions bred by the Nixon-Kissinger détente, and increasing Third World instability. Even those who opposed it began to speak of a renewed cold war.

The Soviet Union evidently believed it could get away with invading Afghanistan to subdue an uprising against a shaky communist government, as it had in the past gotten away with suppressing revolts in Hungary and Czechoslovakia. Undoubtedly, Marxist-Leninists throughout the Third World were emboldened by the American defeat in Vietnam. But there is little reason to think that their subsequent actions were orchestrated from Moscow, and it is arguable that there was a strong element of

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coincidence when several of them came to power almost simultaneously on different continents. The anticolonial movements in the last of the overseas empires, that of Portugal, were bound to triumph sooner or later, offering opportunities to self-declared Marxist-Leninist guerrilla leaders. A natural event, an earthquake, precipitated the mounting unpopularity of the Somoza dictatorship in Nicaragua. Marxist-Leninist movements, as I have stressed, possess real assets when civil strife and popular revolution are the order of the day, especially in backward countries.

The Reagan administration revived the old cold war slogans of the 1940s and 1950s, brandishing them mostly with reference to the Third World rather than to Europe and the Far East. Support for anticommunist guerrillas in communist Third World nations was labeled the "Reagan Doctrine" in imitation of the original Truman Doctrine. The *contras* were called "freedom fighters" after the Hungarian revolutionists of 1956. Republican politicians and neoconservative intellectuals have repeatedly insisted that *they* are the true heirs of Roosevelt, Truman, and Kennedy rather than more recent leaders of the Democratic party, lumping together such diverse figures as McGovern, Carter, Mondale, and Dukakis as "appeasers" and "isolationists" blind to the Soviet threat. Actually, the goal of overthrowing Marxist-Leninist regimes in the Third World echoes James Burnham's call in the early 1950s for "liberation" or "rollback" upheld at the time by the Republican right against the containment policy of the Democratic administration. Such Republican cold warriors of over thirty years ago as John Foster Dulles (at least before the Hungarian revolt unmasked "rollback" as empty rhetoric) and Senators William Knowland, Styles Bridges, and Joseph McCarthy have since been cast into the memory hole by their GOP successors.

The revival of the old anticommunist fervor, directed this time against Third World Marxist-Leninist states, carries little risk and can be indulged in on the cheap. There is a certain parallel between the Reagan administration's evocation of the crusading anticommunist spirit of the cold war at one remove from the original fronts in Europe and Asia and the attraction of New Left radicals to ideological Third Worldism—to "coveting thy neighbor's revolution," as a wit put it, because one cannot hope for a revolution of one's own in the stable industrialized democracies. Old slogans of past rights and lefts can be sounded again at a comfortable distance from one's own society.

Yet despite its affection for Reagan and its preference for Republicans in the White House, the American public has not been much aroused by the crusade against communism in such obscure places as Angola and Nicaragua. The Reagan administration itself tacitly acknowledged the reduced urgency of rivalry with the Soviet Union: at first by appearing to substitute "terrorism" for communism as the primary enemy abroad, later by proclaiming the neo-Wilsonian goal of promoting "democracy" throughout the Third World. The latter emphasis amounted to an abandonment of Jeane Kirkpatrick's doctrine of favoring "authoritarian" over "totalitarian"—that is, Marxist-Leninist—regimes that was so widely touted during Reagan's first term. The Reagan administration tried to claim credit for the sudden unexpected collapse of right-wing regimes in Argentina, Haiti, and the Philippines that, according to the Kirkpatrick doctrine, were presumptive allies of the United States. This tactic unavoidably led to a diversion of attention from the cold war with the Soviet Union and from communism as our major adversary.

I do not want to seem to have minimized the importance of the new direction in the Soviet Union promoted by Gorbachev. It is certainly the most significant development in world politics in the last forty years. But it scarcely lacks for interpreters and celebrants among Western observers. The media bath in which we are constantly immersed, however, often leads us to overlook slower, more dispersed trends that we may have come to take much for granted. My purpose here has been to point to some of these trends in order to suggest that, whatever the fate of Gorbachev's reforms, the cold war may now be passing into history. □

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Richard Rorty

EDUCATION WITHOUT DOGMA

Truth, Freedom, & Our Universities

When people on the political right talk about education, they immediately start talking about truth. Typically, they enumerate what they take to be familiar and self-evident truths and regret that these are no longer being inculcated in the young. When people on the political left talk about education, they talk first about freedom. The left typically views the old familiar truths cherished by the right as a crust of convention that needs to be broken through, vestiges of old-fashioned modes of thought from which the new generation should be freed.

When this opposition between truth and freedom becomes explicit, both sides wax philosophical and produce theories about the nature of truth and freedom. The right usually offers a theory according to which, if you have truth, freedom will follow automatically. Human beings, says this theory, have within them a truth-tracking faculty called "reason," an instrument capable of uncovering the intrinsic nature of things. Once such obstacles as the passions or sin are overcome, the natural light of reason will guide us to the truth. Deep within our souls there is a spark that the right sort of education can fan into flame. Once the soul is afire with love of truth, freedom will follow—for freedom consists in realizing one's *true* self; that is, in the actualization of one's capacity to be rational. So, the right concludes, only the truth can make us free.

This Platonic picture of education as the awakening of the true self can easily be adapted to the needs of the left. The left dismisses Platonic ascetism and exalts Socratic social criticism. It identifies the obstacles to freedom that education must overcome not with the passions or with sin but with convention and prejudice. What the right calls "overcoming the passions," the left calls "stifling healthy animal instincts." What the right thinks of as the triumph of reason, the left describes as the triumph of acculturation—acculturation engineered by the powers that be. What the right describes as civilizing the young, the left describes as alienating them from their true selves. In the tradition of Rousseau, Marx, Nietzsche, and Foucault, the left pictures society as depriving the young of their freedom and of their essential humanity so that they may function as frictionless cogs in a vast, inhuman socioeconomic machine. So, for the left, the proper function of education is to make the young realize that they should not consent to this alienating process of socialization. On the leftist's inverted version of Plato, if you take care of freedom—especially political and economic freedom—truth will take care of itself. For truth is what will be believed once the alienating and repressive forces of society are removed.

On both the original, rightist, and the inverted, leftist account of the matter, there is a natural connection between truth and freedom. Both argue for this connection on the basis of distinctions between nature and convention and between what is essentially human and what is inhuman. Both accept the identification of truth and freedom with the essentially human. The

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difference between them is simply over the question: Is the present socioeconomic setup in accordance, more or less, with nature? Is it, on the whole, a realization of human potentialities or rather a way of frustrating those potentialities? Will acculturation to the norms of our society produce freedom or alienation?

On abstract philosophical topics, therefore, the right and the left are largely in agreement. The interesting differences between right and left about education are concretely political. Conservatives think that the present setup is, if not exactly good, at least better than any alternative suggested by the radical left. They think that at least some of the traditional slogans of our society, some pieces of its conventional wisdom, are the deliverances of "reason." That is why they think education should concentrate on resurrecting and reestablishing what they call "fundamental truths which are now neglected or despised." Radicals, in contrast, share Frank Lentricchia's view that the society in which we live is "mainly unreasonable." So they regard the conservative's "fundamental truths" as what Foucault calls "the discourse of power." They think that continuing to inculcate the conventional wisdom amounts to betraying the students.

In the liberal democracies of recent times, the tension between these two attitudes has been resolved by a fairly simple, fairly satisfactory, compromise. The right has pretty much kept control of primary and secondary education and the left has gradually gotten control of nonvocational higher education. In America, our system of local school boards means that precollege teachers cannot, in the classroom, move very far from the local consensus. By contrast, the success of the American Association of University Professors (AAUP) in enforcing academic freedom means that many college teachers set their own agendas. So education up to the age of eighteen or nineteen is mostly a matter of socialization—of getting the students to take over the moral and political common sense of the society as it is. It is obviously not only that, since sympathetic high-school teachers often assist curious or troubled students by showing them where to find alternatives to this common sense. But these exceptions cannot be made the rule. For any society has a right to expect that, whatever else happens in the course of adolescence, the schools will inculcate most of what is generally believed.

Around the age of eighteen or nineteen, however, American students whose parents are affluent enough to send them to reasonably good colleges find themselves in the hands of teachers well to the left of the teachers they met in high school. These teachers do their best to nudge each successive college generation a little more to the left, to make them a little more conscious of the cruelty built into our institutions, of the need for reform, of the need to be skeptical about the current consensus. Obviously this is not all that happens in college, since a lot of college is, explicitly or implicitly, vocational training. But our hope that colleges will be more than vocational schools is largely a hope that they will encourage such Socratic skepticism. We hope that the students can be distracted from their struggle to get into a high-paying profession, and that the professors will not *simply* try to reproduce themselves by preparing the students to enter graduate study in their own disciplines.

This means that most of the skirmishing about education between left and right occurs on the borders between secondary and higher education. Even ardent radicals, for all their talk of "education for freedom," secretly hope that the elementary schools will teach the kids to wait their turn in line, not to shoot up in the johns, to obey the cop on the corner, and to spell, punctuate, multiply, and divide. They do not really want the high schools to produce, every year, a graduating class of amateur Zarathustras. Conversely, only the most resentful and blinkered conservatives want to ensure that colleges hire only teachers who will endorse the status quo. Things get difficult when one tries to figure out where socialization should stop and criticism start.

This difficulty is aggravated by the fact that both conservatives and radicals have trouble realizing that education is not a continuous process from age five to age twenty-two. Both tend to ignore the fact that the word "education" covers two entirely distinct, and equally necessary, processes—socialization and

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individuation. They both fall into the trap of thinking that a single set of ideas will work for both high school and college education. That is why both have had trouble noticing the differences between Allan Bloom's *The Closing of the American Mind* and E. D. Hirsch's *Cultural Literacy*. The cultural left in America sees Bloom and Hirsch as examples of a single assault on freedom, twin symptoms of a fatuous Reaganite complacency. Conservatives, on the other hand, overlook the difference between Bloom's Straussian doubts about democracy and Hirsch's Deweyan hopes for a better educated democratic electorate: They think of both books as urging us to educate for truth, and to worry less about freedom.

Let me now put some of my own cards on the table. I think that Hirsch is largely right about the high schools and Bloom largely wrong about the colleges. I think that the conservatives are wrong in thinking that we have either a truth-tracking faculty called "reason" or a true self that education brings to consciousness. I think that the radicals are right in saying that if you take care of political, economic, cultural, and academic freedom, then truth will take care of itself. But I think the radicals are wrong in believing that there is a true self that will emerge once the repressive influence of society is removed. There is no such thing as human nature, in the deep sense in which Plato and Strauss use this term. Nor is there such a thing as alienation from one's essential humanity due to societal repression, in the deep sense made familiar by Rousseau and the Marxists. There is only the shaping of an animal into a human being by a process of socialization, followed (with luck) by the self-individualization and self-creation of that human being through his or her own later revolt against that very process. Hirsch is dead right in saying that we Americans no longer give our children a secondary education that enables them to function as citizens of a democracy. Bloom is dead wrong in thinking that the point of higher education is to help students grasp the "natural" superiority of those who lead "the theoretical life." The point of nonvocational higher education is, instead, to help students realize that they can reshape themselves—that they can rework the self-image foisted on them by their past, the self-image that makes them competent citizens, into a new self-image, one that they themselves have helped to create.

I take myself, in holding these opinions, to be a fairly faithful follower of John Dewey. Dewey's great contribution to the theory of education was to help us get rid of the idea that education is a matter of either inducing or educing truth. Primary and secondary education will always be a matter of familiarizing the young with what their elders take to be true, whether it is true or not. It is not, and never will be, the function of lower-level education to challenge the prevailing consensus about what is true. Socialization has to come before individuation, and education for freedom cannot begin before some constraints have been imposed. But, for quite different reasons, nonvocational higher education is also not a matter of inculcating or educing truth. It is, instead, a matter of inciting doubt and stimulating imagination, thereby challenging the prevailing consensus. If precollege education produces literate citizens and college education produces self-creating individuals, then questions about whether students are being taught the truth can safely be neglected.

Dewey put a new twist on the idea that if you take care of freedom, truth will take care of itself. For both the original Platonism of the right and the inverted Platonism of the left, that claim means that if you free the true self from various constraints it will automatically see truth. Dewey showed us how to drop the notion of "the true self" and how to drop the distinction between nature and convention. He taught us to call "true" whatever belief results from a free and open encounter of opinions, without asking whether this result agrees with something beyond that encounter. For Dewey, the sort of freedom that guarantees truth is not freedom from the passions or sin. Nor is it freedom from tradition or from what Foucault called "power." It is simply sociopolitical freedom, the sort of freedom found in bourgeois democracies. Instead of justifying democratic freedoms by reference to an account of

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human nature and the nature of reason, Dewey takes the desire to preserve and expand such freedoms as a starting point—something we need not look behind. Instead of saying that free and open encounters track truth by permitting a mythical faculty called "reason" to function unfettered, he says simply that we have no better criterion of truth than "what results from such encounters."

This account of truth—the account that has recently been revived by Jürgen Habermas—amounts to putting aside the notion that truth is correspondence to reality. More generally, it puts aside the idea that inquiry aims at accurately representing what lies outside the human mind (whether this be conceived as the will of God, or the layout of Plato's realm of ideas, or the arrangement of atoms in the void). It thereby gets rid of the idea that sociopolitical institutions need to be "based" on some such outside foundation.

For Dewey, as for Habermas, what takes the place of the urge to represent reality accurately is the urge to come to free agreement with our fellow human beings—to be full participating members of a free community of inquiry. Dewey offered neither the conservative's philosophical justification of democracy by reference to eternal values nor the radical's justification by reference to decreasing alienation. He did not try to justify democracy at all. He saw democracy not as founded upon the nature of man or reason or reality but as a promising experiment engaged in by a particular herd of a particular species of animal—our species and our herd. He asks us to put our faith in ourselves—in the utopian hope characteristic of a democratic community—rather than asking for reassurance or backup from outside.

This notion of a species of animals gradually taking control of its own evolution by changing its environmental conditions leads Dewey to say, in good Darwinian language, that "growth itself is the moral end" and that to "protect, sustain and direct growth is the chief *ideal* of education." Dewey's conservative critics denounced him for fuzziness, for not giving us a criterion of growth. But Dewey rightly saw that any such criterion would cut the future down to the size of the present. Asking for such a criterion is like asking a dinosaur to specify what would make for a good mammal or asking a fourth-century Athenian to propose forms of life for the citizens of a twentieth-century industrial democracy.

Instead of criteria, Deweyans offer inspiring narratives and fuzzy utopias. Dewey had stories to tell about our progress from Plato to Bacon to the Mills, from religion to rationalism to experimentalism, from tyranny to feudalism to democracy. In their later stages, his stories merged with Emerson's and Whitman's descriptions of the democratic vistas—with their vision of America as the place where human beings will become unimaginably wonderful, different, and free. For Dewey, Emerson's talent for criterionless hope was the essence of his value to his country. In 1903 Dewey wrote: "[T]he coming century may well make evident what is just now dawning, that Emerson is not only a philosopher, but that he is the Philosopher of Democracy." Dewey's point was that Emerson did not offer truth, but simply hope. Hope—the ability to believe that the future will be unspecifiably different from, and unspecifiably freer than, the past—is the condition of growth. That sort of hope was all that Dewey himself offered us, and by offering it he became our century's Philosopher of Democracy.

Let me now turn to the topic of how a Deweyan conceives of the relation between precollege and college education, between the need for socialization and the need to remove the barriers that socialization inevitably imposes. There is a standard caricature of Dewey's views that says Dewey thought that kids should learn to multiply or to obey the cop on the corner only if they have democratically chosen that lesson for the day, or only if this particular learning experience happens to meet their currently felt needs. This sort of nondirective nonsense was not what Dewey had in mind. It is true, as Hirsch says, that Dewey "too hastily rejected 'the piling up of information.' " But I doubt that it ever occurred to Dewey that a day would come when students could graduate from an American high school not knowing who came first: Plato or Shakespeare, Napoleon or Lincoln, Frederick Douglass or Martin Luther King, Jr. Dewey too

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hastily assumed that nothing would ever stop the schools from piling on the information and that the only problem was to get them to do other things as well.

Dewey was wrong about this. But he could not have foreseen the educationist establishment with which Hirsch is currently battling. He could not have foreseen that the United States would decide to pay its precollege teachers a fifth of what it pays its doctors. Nor did he foresee that an increasingly greedy and heartless American middle class would let the quality of education a child receives become proportional to the assessed value of the parents' real estate. Finally, he did not foresee that most children would spend thirty hours a week watching televised fantasies, nor that the cynicism of those who produce these fantasies would carry over into our children's vocabularies of moral deliberation.

But Dewey's failures of prescience do not count against his account of truth and freedom. Nor should they prevent us from accepting his notion of the socialization American children should receive. For Dewey, this socialization consisted in acquiring an image of themselves as heirs to a tradition of increasing liberty and rising hope. Updating Dewey a bit, we can think of him as wanting the children to come to think of themselves as proud and loyal citizens of a country that, slowly and painfully, threw off a foreign yoke, freed its slaves, enfranchised its women, restrained its robber barons and licensed its trade unions, liberalized its religious practices and broadened its religious and moral tolerance, and built colleges in which 50 percent of its population could enroll—a country that numbered Jefferson, Thoreau, Susan B. Anthony, Eugene Debs, Woodrow Wilson, Walter Reuther, FDR, Rosa Parks, and James Baldwin among its citizens. Dewey wanted the inculcation of this narrative of freedom and hope to be the core of the socializing process.

As Hirsch quite rightly says, that narrative will not be intelligible unless a lot of information gets piled up in the children's heads. Radical critics of Hirsch's books have assumed that he wants education to be a matter of memorizing lists rather than reading interesting books, but this does not follow from what Hirsch says. All that follows is that the students be examined on their familiarity with the people, things, and events mentioned in those books. Hirsch's radical critics would sound more plausible if they offered some concrete suggestions about how to get such a narrative inculcated without setting examinations tailored to lists like Hirsch's or if they had some suggestions about how eighteen-year-olds who find *Newsweek* over their heads are to choose between political candidates.

Let us suppose, for a moment, that Hirsch's dreams came true. Suppose we succeed not only in inculcating such a narrative of national hope in most of our students but in setting it in the larger context of a narrative of world history and literature, all this against the background of the world-picture offered by the natural scientists. Suppose, that is, that after pouring money into precollege education, firing the curriculum experts, abolishing the licensing requirements, building brand-new, magnificently equipped schools in the inner cities, and instituting Hirsch-like school-leaving examinations, it proves possible to make most American nineteen-year-olds as culturally literate as Dewey and Hirsch have dreamed they might be. What, in such a utopia, would be the educational function of American colleges? What would policymakers in higher education worry about?

I think all that they would then need to worry about would be finding teachers who were not exclusively concerned with preparing people to be graduate students in their various specialities and then making sure that these teachers get a chance to give whatever courses they feel like giving. They would still need to worry about making sure that higher education was not purely vocational—not simply a matter of fulfilling prerequisites for professional schools or reproducing current disciplinary matrices. They would not, however, have to worry about the integrity of the curriculum or about the challenge of connecting learning—any more than administrators in French and German universities worry about such things. That sort of worry would be left to secondary-school administrators. If Hirsch's dreams ever come

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true, then the colleges will be free to get on with their proper business. That business is to offer a blend of specialized vocational training and provocation to self-creation.

The socially most important provocations will be offered by teachers who make vivid and concrete the failure of the country of which we remain loyal citizens to live up to its own ideals—the failure of America to be what it knows it ought to become. This is the traditional function of the reformist liberal left, as opposed to the revolutionary radical left. In recent decades, it has been the main function of American college teachers in the humanities and social sciences. Carrying out this function, however, cannot be made a matter of explicit institutional policy. For, if it is being done right, it is too complicated, controversial, and tendentious to be the subject of agreement in a faculty meeting. Nor is it the sort of thing that can be easily explained to the governmental authorities or the trustees who supply the cash. It is a matter that has to be left up to individual college teachers to do or not do as they think fit, as their sense of responsibility to their students and their society inspires them. To say that, whatever their other faults, American colleges and universities remain bastions of academic freedom, is to say that the typical administrator would not dream of trying to interfere with a teacher's attempt to carry out such responsibilities.

In short, if the high schools were doing the job that lots of money and determination might make them able to do, the colleges would not have to worry about Great Books, or general education, or overcoming fragmentation. The faculty could just teach whatever seemed good to them to teach, and the administrators could get along nicely without much knowledge of what was being taught. They could rest content with making sure that teachers who want to teach a course that had never been taught before, or assign materials that had never been assigned before, or otherwise break out of the disciplinary matrix that some academic department has been perpetuating are free to do so—as well as trying to ensure that teachers who might want to do such things get appointed to the faculty.

But, in the real world, the nineteen-year-olds arrive at the doors of the colleges not knowing a lot of the words on Hirsch's list. They still have to be taught a lot of memorizable conventional wisdom of the sort that gets dinned into the heads of their coevals in other countries. So the colleges have to serve as finishing schools, and the administrators sometimes have to dragoon the faculty into helping with this task. As things unfortunately—and with luck only temporarily—are, the colleges have to finish the job of socialization. Worse yet, they have to do this when the students are already too old and too restless to put up with such a process. It would be well for the colleges to remind us that nineteen is an age when young people should have finished absorbing the best that has been thought and said and should have started becoming suspicious of it. It would also be well for them to remind us that the remedial work that society currently forces college faculties to undertake—the kind of work that Great Books curricula are typically invented in order to carry out—is just an extra chore, analogous to the custodial functions forced upon the high-school teachers. Such courses may, of course, be immensely valuable to students—as they were to Allan Bloom and me when we took them at the University of Chicago forty years ago. Nevertheless, carrying out such remedial tasks is not the social function of colleges and universities.

We Deweyans think that the social function of American colleges is to help the students see that the national narrative around which their socialization has centered is an open-ended one. It is to tempt the students to make themselves into people who can stand to their own pasts as Emerson and Anthony, Debs and Baldwin, stood to *their* pasts. This is done by helping the students realize that, despite the progress that the present has made over the past, the good has once again become the enemy of the better. With a bit of help, the students will start noticing everything that is paltry and mean and unfree in their surroundings. With luck, the best of them will succeed in altering the conventional wisdom, so that the

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next generation is socialized in a somewhat different way than they themselves were socialized. To hope that this way will only be somewhat different is to hope that the society will remain reformist and democratic, rather than being convulsed by revolution. To hope that it will nevertheless be perceptibly different is to remind oneself that growth is indeed the only end that democratic higher education can serve and also to remind oneself that the direction of growth is unpredictable.

This is why we Deweyans think that, although Hirsch is right in asking, "What should they know when they come out of high school?" and "What remedial work remains, things being as they are, for the colleges to do?", the question "What should they learn in college?" had better go unasked. Such questions suggest that college faculties are instrumentalities that can be ordered to a purpose. The temptation to suggest this comes over administrators occasionally, as does the feeling that higher education is too important to be left to the professors. From an administrative point of view, the professors often seem self-indulgent and self-obsessed. They look like loose cannons, people whose habit of setting their own agendas needs to be curbed. But administrators sometimes forget that college students badly need to find themselves in a place in which people are not ordered to a purpose, in which loose cannons are free to roll about. The only point of having real live professors around instead of just computer terminals, videotapes, and mimeoed lecture notes is that students need to have freedom enacted before their eyes by actual human beings. That is why tenure and academic freedom are more than just trade union demands. Teachers setting their own agendas—putting their individual, lovingly prepared specialities on display in the curricular cafeteria, without regard to any larger end, much less any institutional plan—is what nonvocational higher education is all about.

Such enactments of freedom are the principal occasions of the erotic relationships between teacher and student that Socrates and Allan Bloom celebrate and that Plato unfortunately tried to capture in a theory of human nature and of the liberal arts curriculum. But love is notoriously untheorizable. Such erotic relationships are occasions of growth, and their occurrence and their development are as unpredictable as growth itself. Yet nothing important happens in nonvocational higher education without them. Most of these relationships are with the dead teachers who wrote the books the students are assigned, but some will be with the live teachers who are giving the lectures. In either case, the sparks that leap back and forth between teacher and student, connecting them in a relationship that has little to do with socialization but much to do with self-creation, are the principal means by which the institutions of a liberal society get changed. Unless some such relationships are formed, the students will never realize what democratic institutions are good for: namely, making possible the invention of new forms of human freedom, taking liberties never taken before.

I shall end by returning to the conservative-radical contrast with which I began. I have been trying to separate both the conservative's insistence on community and the radical's insistence on individuality from philosophical theories about human nature and about the foundations of democratic society. Platonism and Nietzsche's inversion of Platonism seem to me equally unfruitful in thinking about education. As an alternative, I have offered Dewey's exaltation of democracy for its own sake and of growth for its own sake—an exaltation as fruitful as it is fuzzy.

This fuzziness annoys the conservatives because it does not provide enough sense of direction and enough constraints. The same fuzziness annoys the radicals because it provides neither enough fuel for resentment nor enough hope for sudden, revolutionary change. But the fuzziness that Dewey shared with Emerson is emblematic of what Wallace Stevens and Harold Bloom call "the American Sublime." That Sublime still lifts up the hearts of some fraction of each generation of college students. Whatever we may decide to do by way of connecting learning, we should do nothing that would make such exaltation less likely. □

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Ann Snitow

PAGES FROM A GENDER DIARY

Basic Divisions in Feminism

In the early days of this wave of the women's movement, I sat in a weekly consciousness raising group with my friend A. We compared notes recently: What did you think was happening? How did you think our own lives were going to change? A. said she had felt, "Now I can be a woman; it's no longer so humiliating. I can stop fantasizing that secretly I am a man, as I used to, before I had children. Now I can value what was once my shame." Her answer amazed me. Sitting in the same meetings during those years, my thoughts were roughly the reverse: "Now I don't have to be a woman anymore. I need never become a mother. Being a woman has always been humiliating, but I used to assume there was no exit. Now the very idea 'woman' is up for grabs. 'Woman' is my slave name; feminism will give me freedom to seek some other identity altogether."

On its face this clash of theoretical and practical positions may seem absurd, but it is my goal to explore such contradictions, to show why they are not absurd at all. Feminism is inevitably a mixed form, requiring in its very nature such inconsistencies. In what follows I try to show first, that a common divide keeps forming in both feminist thought and action between the need to build the identity "woman" and give it solid political meaning and the need to tear down the very category "woman" and dismantle its all-too-solid history. Feminists often split along the lines of some version of this argument, and that splitting is my subject. Second, I argue that though a settled compromise between these positions is currently impossible, and though a constant choosing of sides is tactically unavoidable, feminists—and indeed most women—live in a complex relationship to this central feminist divide. From moment to moment we perform subtle psychological and social negotiations about just how gendered we choose to be.

This tension—between needing to act as women and needing an identity not overdetermined by our gender—is as old as Western feminism. It is at the core of what feminism is. The divide runs, twisting and turning, right through movement history. The problem of identity it poses was barely conceivable before the eighteenth century, when almost everyone saw women as a separate species. Since then the idea "woman" has become a question rather than a given, a question increasingly unavoidable as an earlier absolute definition of gender difference has begun its long, slow, and fundamental erosion.

In the current wave of the movement, the divide is more urgent and central a part of feminism than ever before. On the one hand, many women moved by feminism are engaged by its promise of solidarity, the poetry of a retrieved worth. It feels glorious, Michelle Cliff says, to "reclaim an identity they taught [us] to despise." Movement passion rescues women-only groups from contempt; female intimacy acquires new meanings and becomes more threatening to the male exclusiveness so long considered "the world."

On the other hand, other feminists, often equally stirred by solidarity, rebel against having to be "women" at all. They argue that whenever we uncritically accept the monolith "woman," we run the risk of merely relocating ourselves inside the old closed ring of an unchanging feminine nature. But is there any

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such reliable nature? In each case these feminists question the eternal sisterhood: What about class, age, race, nationality?[1]

Names for a Recurring Feminist Divide

In every case, the specialness of women has this double face, though often, in the heat of new confrontations, feminists suffer a harmful amnesia; we forget about this paradox we live with. Feminist theorists keep renaming this tension, as if new names could advance feminist political work. But at this point new names are likely to tempt us to forget that we have named this split before. In the service of trying to help us recognize what we are fated—for some time—to repeat, here is a reminder of past categories.

Minimizers and Maximizers

The divide so central as to be feminism's defining characteristic goes by many names. Kate Stimpson cleverly called it the feminist debate between the "minimizers" and the "maximizers."[2] Briefly, the minimizers are feminists who want to undermine the category "woman," to minimize the meaning of sex difference. (As we shall see, this stance can have surprisingly different political faces.) The maximizers want to keep the category (or feel they can't do otherwise), but they want to change its meaning, to reclaim and elaborate the social being "woman," and to empower her.

Radical Feminists and Cultural Feminists

In *Daring to Be Bad: A History of the Radical Feminist Movement in America, 1967–1975,* Alice Echols sees this divide on a time line of the current women's movement, with "radical feminism" more typical of the initial feminist impulse in this wave succeeded by "cultural feminism." Echols's definition of the initial bursts of "radical feminism" shows that it also included "cultural feminism" in embryo. She argues that both strains were present from the first—contradictory elements that soon proclaimed themselves as tensions in sisterhood. Nonetheless, the earlier groups usually defined the commonality of "women" as the shared fact of their oppression by "men." Women were to work separately from men not as a structural ideal but because such separation was necessary to escape a domination that only a specifically feminist (rather than mixed left) politics could change.

On the other side stands Echols's category, "cultural feminism." In her depiction of the divide, the cultural feminist celebration of being female was a retreat from "radical feminism": "[I]t was easier to rehabilitate femininity than to abolish gender."[3] She offers as a prime example of the growth of cultural feminism the popularity of Jane Alpert's "new feminist theory," published in *Ms.* magazine in 1973 as "Mother Right":

> [F]eminists have asserted that the essential difference between women and men does not lie in biology but rather in the roles that patriarchal societies (men) have required each sex to play. . . . However, a flaw in this feminist argument has persisted: *it contradicts our felt experience of the biological difference between the sexes as one of immense significance.* . . .The unique consciousness or sensibility of women, the particular attributes that set feminist art apart, and a compelling line of research now being pursued by feminist anthropologists all point to the idea that *female biology is the basis of women's powers.* Biology is hence the source and not the enemy of feminist revolution.

Echols concludes that by 1973, "Alpert's contention that women were united by their common biology was enormously tempting, given the factionalism within the movement."

Ironically, then, the pressure of differences that quickly surfaced in the women's movement between lesbians and straight women, between white and black, between classes, was a key source of the new pressure towards unity. The female body offered a permanence and an immediately rich identity that radical feminism, with its call to a long, often negative struggle of resistance, could not.

As her tone reveals, in Echols's account, "radical feminism" is a relatively positive term and "cultural feminism" an almost entirely negative one. As I'll explain later, I have a number of reasons for sharing this judgment. Finally, though, it won't help us to understand recurring feminist oppositions if we simply sort them into progressive versus reactionary align-

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ments. The divide is nothing so simple as a split between truly radical activists and benighted conservative ones, or between real agents for change and liberal reformers, or between practical fighters and sophisticated theorists. The sides in this debate don't line up neatly in these ways. Maximizers and minimizers have political histories that converge and diverge. A pretense of neutrality won't get us anywhere either. I'm describing a struggle here, and every account of it contains its overt or covert tropism toward one side or the other.

Essentialists and Social Constructionists

One has only to move from an account of movement politics to one of feminist theory in order to reverse Echols's scenario of decline. In academic feminist discussion, the divide between the "essentialists" and the "social constructionists" has been a rout for the essentialists. Briefly, essentialists (like Alpert, above) see gender as rooted in biological sex differences. Hardly anyone of any camp will now admit to being an essentialist, since the term has become associated with a naive claim to an eternal female nature. All the same, essentialism, like its counterpart, cultural feminism, is abundantly present in current movement work. When Barbara Deming writes that "the capacity to bear and nurture children gives women a special consciousness, a spiritual advantage rather than a disadvantage," she is assigning an enduring meaning to anatomical sex differences. When Andrea Dworkin describes how through sex a woman's "insides are worn away over time, and she, possessed, becomes weak, depleted, usurped in all her physical and mental energies . . . by the one who occupies her," she is asserting that in sex women are immolated as a matter of course, in the nature of things.[4]

"Social construction"—the idea that the meaning of the body is changeable—is far harder to embrace with confidence. As Ellen Willis once put it, culture may shape the body, but we feel that the body has ways of pushing back. To assert that the body has no enduring, natural language often seems like a rejection of common sense. Where can a woman stand—embodied or disembodied—in the flow of this argument?

Writing not about gender in general but about that more focused issue of bodies and essences, sexuality, Carole Vance muses over the strengths and vicissitudes of "social construction" theory. She observes that the social constructionists who try to discuss sexuality differ about just what is constructed. Few would go so far as to say that the body plays no part at all as a material condition on which we build desire and sexual mores. But even for those social constructionists who try to escape entirely from any a priori ideas about the body, essentialism makes a sly comeback through unexamined assumptions. For example, how can social constructionists confidently say they are studying "sexuality"? If there is no essential, transhistorical biology of arousal, then there is no unitary subject, "sexuality," to discuss: "If sexuality is constructed differently at each time and place, can we use the term in a comparatively meaningful way? . . . [H]ave constructionists undermined their own categories? Is there an 'it' to study?"[5]

In the essentialist–versus–social constructionist version of the divide, one can see that one term in the argument is far more stable than the other. Essentialism such as Jane Alpert's in "Mother Right" assumes a relatively stable social identity in "male" and "female," while as Carole Vance argues, social construction is at its best as a source of destabilizing questions. By definition social construction theory cannot offer a securely bounded area for the study of gender; instead it initiates an inspiring collapse of gender verities.

Cultural Feminists and Poststructuralists

The contrast between more and less stable categories suggests yet another recent vocabulary for the feminist divide. In "Cultural Feminism versus Post-Structuralism: The Identity Crisis in Feminist Theory," Linda Alcoff puts Echols's definition of "cultural feminism" up against what she sees as a more recent counterdevelopment: feminist poststructural theory. By speaking only of "the last ten years," Alcoff lops off the phase of "radical feminism" that preceded "cultural feminism" in move-

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ment history, leaving the revisionist image of extreme essentialism (such as Mary Daly's in *Gyn/Ecology*) as the basic matrix of feminist thought from which a radical "nominalism" has more recently and heroically departed, calling all categories into doubt.[6] It is no accident that with attention to detail, Alice Echols can trace a political decline from "radical feminism" to "cultural feminism" between 1967 and 1975 while Linda Alcoff can persuasively trace a gain in theoretical understanding from "cultural feminism" to "poststructuralism" between 1978 and 1988. Put them together and both narratives change: Instead of collapse or progress, we see one typical oscillation in the historical life of the divide.

These two accounts are also at odds because they survey very different political locations: Echols is writing about radical feminist activism, Alcoff about developments in academic feminist theory. Though political activism has developed a different version of the central debate from that of the more recent academic feminism, both confront the multiple problems posed by the divide. Nor will a model that goes like this work: *thesis* (essentialism, cultural feminism), *antithesis* (poststructuralism, deconstruction, Lacanian psychoanalysis), *synthesis* (some stable amalgam of women's solidarity that includes radical doubts about the formation, cohesion, and potential power of the group).

Instead, the divide keeps forming *inside* each of these categories. It is fundamental at any level one cares to meet it: material, psychological, linguistic. For example, U.S. feminist theorists don't agree about whether poststructuralism tends more often toward its own version of essentialism (strengthening the arguments of maximizers by recognizing an enduring position of female Other) or whether poststructuralism is instead the best tool minimalists have (weakening any universalized, permanent concept such as Woman[7]). Certainly poststructuralists disagree among themselves, and this debate around and inside poststructuralism should be no surprise. In feminist discourse a tension keeps forming between finding a useful lever in female identity and seeing that identity as hopelessly compromised.

I'm not regressing here to the good old days of an undifferentiated, undertheorized sisterhood, trying to blur distinctions others have usefully struggled to establish, but I do want to explore a configuration—the divide—that repeats in very different circumstances. For example, in an earlier oscillation, both radical feminism and liberal feminism offered their own versions of doubt about cultural feminism and essentialism. Liberal feminists refused the idea that biology should structure women's public and sometimes even their private roles. Radical feminists saw the creation and maintenance of gender difference as the means by which patriarchs controlled women.[8] Though neither group had the powerful theoretical tools later developed by the poststructuralists, both intimated basic elements in poststructuralist work: that the category "woman" was a construction, a discourse over which there had been an ongoing struggle; and that the self, the "subject," was as much the issue as were social institutions. To be sure, these early activists often foolishly ignored Freud; they invoked an unproblematic "self" that could be rescued from the dark male tower of oppression; and they hourly expected the radical deconstruction of gender, as if the deconstruction of what had been constructed was relatively easy. Nonetheless, radical, philosophical doubts about the cohesion of "woman" have roots that go all the way down in the history of both liberal and radical feminism.

Recently I asked feminist critic Marianne DeKoven for a piece she and Linda Bamber wrote about the divide for the Modern Language Association in 1982. "Feminists have refined our thinking a great deal since then," she said. Yes, no doubt; but there is not much from the recent past that we can confidently discard. In fact, the Bamber-DeKoven depiction of the divide remains useful because we are nowhere near a synthesis that would make these positions relics of a completed phase. One side of the divide, Bamber says in her half of the paper, "has been loosely identified with American feminism, the other with French feminism."

> But in fact these labels are inadequate, as both responses can be found in the work of both French and American feminists. Instead of debating French vs. American feminism, then, I want to

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define the two poles of our responses non-judgmentally and simply list their characteristics under Column A and Column B.

Column A feminism is political, empirical, historical. A Column A feminist rebels against the marginalization of women and demands access to "positions that require knowledge and confer power." A Column A feminist insists on woman as subject, on equal pay for equal work, on the necessity for women to be better represented in political life, the media, history books, etc. Column A feminism assumes, as Marks and de Courtivron put it, "that women have (always) been present but invisible and if they look they will find themselves."

The Column B feminist, on the other hand, is not particularly interested in the woman as subject. Instead of claiming power, knowledge and high culture for women, Column B feminism attacks these privileged quantities as "phallogocentric." . . . The feminine in Column B is part of the challenge to God, money, the phallus, origins and ends, philosophical privilege, the transcendent author, representation, the Descartian cogito, transparent language, and so on. The feminine is valorized as fragment, absence, scandal. . . . Whereas the Column A feminist means to occupy the center on equal terms with men, the Column B feminist, sometimes aided by Derrida, Lacan, Althusser, Levi-Strauss and Foucault, subverts the center and endorses her own marginality.[9]

No doubt Bamber and DeKoven would restate these terms now in the light of seven more years of good, collective feminist work, but I am trying to write against the grain of that usually excellent impulse here, trying to suggest a more distant perspective in which seven years become a dot.

Alcoff is only the latest in a long line of frustrated feminists who want to push beyond the divide, to be done with it. She writes typically: "We cannot simply embrace the paradox. In order to avoid the serious disadvantages of cultural feminism and post-structuralism, feminism needs to transcend the dilemma by developing a third course. . . ."[10] But "embracing the paradox" is just what feminism cannot choose but do. There is no transcendence, no third course. The urgent contradiction women constantly experience between the pressure to be a woman and the pressure not to be one will change only through a historical process; it cannot be dissolved through thought alone.

This is not to undervalue theory in the name of some more solid material reality but to emphasize that the dualism of the divide requires constant work; it resists us. It's not that we can't interrupt current patterns, not that trying to imagine our way beyond them isn't valuable, but that such work is continuous. What is more, activists trying to make fundamental changes, trying to push forward the feminist discourse and alter its material context, don't agree about what sort of synthesis they want. Nor can activists turn to theorists in any direct way for a resolution of these differences. Activism and scholarship have called forth different readings of the divide, but neither of these locations remains innocent of the primary contradiction. There is no marriage of theoretical mind and activist brawn to give us New Feminist Woman. And the recognition that binary thinking is a problem doesn't offer us any immediate solution.

In other words, neither cultural feminism nor poststructuralism suggests a clear course when the time comes to discuss political strategy. Though we have learned much, we are still faced with the continuing strategic difficulty of *what to do*. As Michèle Barrett puts it: "It does not need remarking that the postmodernist point of view is explicitly hostile to any political project beyond the ephemeral."[11] The virtue of the ephemeral action is its way of evading ossification of image or meaning. Ephemerally, we can recognize a possibility we cannot live out, imagine a journey we cannot yet take. We begin: The category "woman" is a fiction; then, poststructuralism suggests ways in which human beings live by fictions; then, in its turn, activism requires of feminists that we elaborate the fiction "woman" as if she were not a provisional invention at all but a person we know well, one in need of obvious rights and powers. Activism and theory weave together here, working on what remains the same basic cloth, the stuff of feminism.

Some theorists like Alcoff reach for a synthesis, a third way, beyond the divide, while others like Bamber and DeKoven choose instead the metaphor of an inescapable, irreducible "doubleness"—a word that crops up everywhere in feminist discussion. To me, the meta-

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phor of doubleness is the more useful: It is a reminder of the unresolved tension on which feminism continues to be built. As Alice Walker puts it in her formal definition of a "womanist" (her word for black feminism): "Appreciates and prefers women's culture, women's emotional flexibility . . . committed to survival and wholeness of entire people, male and female. Not a separatist, except periodically, for health."[12]

This is not to deny change but to give a different estimate of its rate. Mass feminist consciousness has made a great difference; we have created not only new expectations but also new institutions. Yet, inevitably, the optimism of activism has given way to the academic second thoughts that tell us why our work is so hard. For even straightforward, liberal changes—like equal pay or day care—are proving far more elusive than feminists dreamed in 1970. We are moving more slowly than Western women of the late twentieth century can easily accept—or are even likely to imagine.

Motherists and Feminists

If the long view has a virtue beyond the questionable one of inducing calm, it can help feminists include women to whom a rapid political or theoretical movement forward has usually seemed beside the point—poor women, peasant women, and women who for any number of reasons identify themselves not as feminists but as militant mothers, fighting together for survival. In a study group convened by Temma Kaplan since 1985, Grass Roots Movements of Women, feminists who do research about such movements in different parts of the world, past and present, have been meeting to discuss the relationship among revolutionary action, women, and feminist political consciousness. As Meredith Tax described this activism:

> There is a crux in women's history/women's studies, a knot and a blurry place where various things converge. This place has no name and there is no established methodology for studying it. The things that converge there are variously called: community organizations, working-class women's organizations, consumer movements, popular mass organizations, housewives' organizations, mothers' movements, strike support movements, bread strikes, revolutions at the base, women's peace movements. Some feminist or proto-feminist groups and united front organizations of women may be part of this crux. Or they may be different. There is very little theory, either feminist or Marxist, regarding this crux.[13]

The group has been asking: Under what class circumstances do women decide to band together as women, break out of domestic space, and publicly protest? What part have these actions actually played in gaining fundamental political changes? How do women themselves define what they have done and why? Does it make any sense to name feminist thinking as part of this female solidarity? Is there reason to think some kind of feminist consciousness is likely to emerge from this kind of political experience? Is the general marginality of these groups a strength or a weakness?

Almost all the women we have been studying present themselves to the world as mothers (hence, "motherists") acting for the survival of their children. Their groups almost always arise when men are forced to be absent (because they are migrant workers or soldiers) or in times of crisis, when the role of nurturance assigned to women has been rendered impossible. Faced with the imperatives of their traditional work (to feed the children, to keep the family together) and with the loss of bread, or mobility, or whatever they need to do that work, women can turn into a militant force, breaking the shop windows of the baker or the butcher, burning the pass cards, assembling to confront the police state, sitting-in where normally they would never go—on the steps of the governor's house, at the gates of the cruise missile base.

As feminists, it interested us to speculate about whether the women in these groups felt any kind of criticism of the social role of mother itself, or of the structural ghettoization of women, or of the sexism that greets women's political efforts. As Marysa Navarro said of the women she studies, the Mothers of the Plaza de Mayo, who march to make the Argentine government give them news of their kidnapped, murdered children: "They can only consider ends that are mothers' ends." The

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surfacing of political issues beyond the family weakened the Mothers of the Plaza de Mayo. Some wished to claim that party politics don't matter and that their murdered children were innocent of any interest in political struggle. Others felt political activism had been their children's right, one they now wished to share. These argued that their bereavement was not only a moral witnessing of crime and a demand for justice but also a specific intervention with immediate and threatening political implications to the state.

This kind of difference has split the mothers of the Plaza de Mayo along the feminist divide. To what extent is motherhood a powerful identity, a word to conjure with? To what extent is it a patriarchal construction that inevitably places mothers outside the realm of the social, the changing, the active? What power can women who weep, yell, mourn in the street have? Surely a mother's grief and rage removed from the home, suddenly exposed to publicity, are powerful, shocking. Yet as Navarro also points out, the unity of this image was misleading; its force was eventually undermined by differences a group structured around the monolith "mother" was unable to confront.

But, finally, to give the argument one more turn, many Plaza de Mayo women experienced a political transformation through their mothers' network. No group can resolve all political tensions through some ideal formation. The mothers of the disappeared, with their cross-party unity, have been able to convene big demonstrations, drawing new people into the political process. Women can move when a political vacuum develops; by being women who have accepted their lot, they can face the soldiers who have taken their children with a sense of righteous indignation that even a usually murderous police find it hard to dispute. On whatever terms, they have changed the political climate, invented new ways to resist state terrorism.

Using examples like these, the Grass Roots study group gave rise to a particularly poignant exploration of the feminist divide. In each member's work we saw a different version of how women have managed the mixed blessing of their female specialness. Actions like bread riots are desperate and ephemeral, but also effective. With these street eruptions, women put a government on notice; they signal that the poor can be pushed no further. It is finally women who know when the line has been crossed to starvation. But what then? Prices go down; the women go home—until the next time.

Women's movements for survival are like fire storms, changing and dissolving, resistant to political definition. We asked: Would a feminist critique of the traditional role of women keep these groups going longer? Or might feminist insights themselves contribute to the splits that quickly break down the unity shared during crisis? Or, in yet another shift of our assumed values, why *shouldn't* such groups end when the crisis ends, perhaps leaving behind them politicized people, active networks, even community organizations capable of future action when called for? If the left were to expand its definition of political culture beyond the state and the workplace more often, wouldn't the political consciousness of women consumers, mothers, and community activists begin to look enduring in its own way, an important potential source of political energy? Perhaps, our group theorized, we are wrong to wish the women to have formed ongoing political groups growing out of bread riots or meat strikes. Maybe we would see more if we redefined political life to include usually invisible female networks.

The more we talked, the more we saw the ramifications of the fact that the traditional movements were collectivist, the feminist ones more individualistic. Women's local activism draws on a long history of women's culture in which mutual support is essential to life, not (as it often is with contemporary urban feminists) a rare or fragile achievement. The community of peasant women (or working women, or colonized women, or concerned mothers) was a given for the motherists; crisis made the idea of a separate, private identity beyond the daily struggle for survival unimportant. Here was another face of the divide: Collectivist movements are powerful but they usually don't raise questions about women's work. Feminism has raised the questions, and claimed an individual destiny for each woman, but remains ambivalent toward older traditions of female solidarity. Surely our group was ambivalent. We worried that mothers' social net-

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works can rarely redefine the *terms* of their needs. And rich as traditional forms of female association may be, we kept coming on instances in which the power of societies organized for internal support along gender lines was undermined by the sexism of that very organization.

For example, historian Mrinalini Sinha's research describes how the Bengali middle class of nineteenth-century India used its tradition of marrying and bedding child brides as a way of defining itself against a racist, colonial government.[14] The English hypocritically criticized Bengali men as effeminate because they could not wait. Bengali men answered that it was their women who couldn't wait: The way to control unbounded female sexuality—in which, of course, the English disbelieved—was to marry women at first menstruation.

In Sinha's account one rarely hears the voices of Bengali women themselves, but the question of which sexism would control them—the English marriages of restraint or the Bengali marriages of children—raged around these women. Neither side in the quarrel had women's autonomy or power at heart. Both wanted to wage the colonial fight using women as the symbolic representatives of their rivalry. Because Bengali men wanted control of their women just as much as the English wanted control of Bengali men, the anticolonial struggle had less to offer women than men. In general, our group found that sexism inside an oppressed or impoverished community—such as rigidity about gender roles, or about male authority over women, or about female chastity—has cost revolutionary movements a great deal. Too often, gender politics goes unrecognized as an element in class defeat.[15]

Our group disagreed about the women's solidarity we were studying: Was it a part of the long effort to change women's position and to criticize hierarchy in general, or did motherist goals pull in an essentially different direction from feminist ones? And no matter where each one of us found herself on the spectrum of the group's responses to motherist movements, no resolution emerged of the paradox between mothers' goals and the goals of female individuals no longer defined primarily by reproduction and its attendant tasks. We saw this tension in some of the groups we studied, and we kept discovering it in ourselves. (Indeed, some of us were part of groups that used motherist rhetoric, as Ynestra King and I were of women's peace networks, or Amy Swerdlow had been of Women Strike for Peace.)

Drawing hard lines between the traditional women's movements and modern Western feminist consciousness never worked, not because the distinction doesn't exist but because it is woven inside our movement itself. A motherist is in some definitions a feminist, in others not. And these differing feminisms are yoked together by the range of difficulties to be found in women's current situation. Our scholarly distance from the "motherists" kept collapsing. The children's toy-exchange network that Julie Wells described as one of the political groupings that build black women's solidarity in South Africa couldn't help striking us urban women in the United States as a good idea.[16] We, too, are in charge of the children and need each other to get by. We, too, are likely to act politically along the lines of association our female tasks have shaped. We sometimes long for the community the women we were studying took more for granted, although we couldn't help remarking on the ways those sustaining communities—say of union workers, or peasants, or ghettoized racial groups—used women's energy, loyalty, and passion as by right, while usually denying them a say in the group's public life, its historical consciousness.

Culture offers a variety of rewards to women for always giving attention to others first. Love is a special female responsibility. Some feminists see this female giving as fulfilling and morally powerful. Others see it more negatively as a mark of oppression and argue that women are given the job of "life," but that any job relegated to the powerless is one undervalued by the society as a whole. Yet in our group there was one area of agreement: Traditional women's concerns—for life, for the children, for peace—*should* be everyone's. Beyond that agreement the question that recreates the feminist divide remained: *How* can the caring that belongs to "mother" travel out to become the responsibility of everyone? Women's backs hold up the world, and we

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ached for the way women's passionate caring is usually taken for granted, even by women themselves. Some Western feminists, aching like this, want above all to recognize and honor these mothers who, as Adrienne Rich writes, "age after age, perversely, with no extraordinary power, reconstitute the world." Others, also aching, start on what can seem an impossible search for ways to break the ancient, tireless mother's promise to be the mule of the world.

Equality and Difference

By now anyone who has spent time wrangling with feminist issues has recognized the divide and is no doubt waiting for me to produce the name for it that is probably the oldest, certainly the most all-encompassing: "equality" versus "difference." Most feminist thought grapples unavoidably with some aspect of the equality-difference problem at both the level of theory and of strategy. In theory, this version of the divide might be stated: Do women want to be equal to men (with the meaning of "equal" hotly contested),[17] or do women see biology as establishing a difference that will always require a strong recognition and that might ultimately define quite separate possibilities inside "the human"?

Some difference-feminists would argue that women have a special morality, or aesthetic, or capacity for community that it is feminism's responsibility to maximize. Others would put the theoretical case for difference more neutrally and would argue that woman, no matter *what* she is like, is unassimilable. Because she is biologically and therefore psychologically separable from man, she is enduring proof that there is no universally representative human being, no "human wholeness."[18] In contrast, the equality-feminists would argue that it is possible for the biological difference to wither away as a basis for social organization, either by moving men and women toward some shared center (androgyny) or toward some experience of human variety in which biology is but one small variable.

Difference theory tends to emphasize the body (and more recently the unconscious where the body's psychic meaning develops); equality theory tends to deemphasize the body and to place faith in each individual's capacity to develop a self not ultimately circumscribed by a collective law of gender. For difference theorists the body can be either the site of pain and oppression or the site of orgasmic ecstasy and maternal joy. For equality theorists neither extreme is as compelling as the overriding idea that the difference between male and female bodies is a problem in need of solution. In this view, therefore, sexual hierarchy and sexual oppression are bound to continue unless the body is transcended or displaced as the center of female identity.

At the level of practical strategy, the equality-difference divide is just as ubiquitous as it is in theory. Willingly or not, activist lawyers find themselves pitted against each other because they disagree about whether "equal treatment" before the law is better or worse for women than "special treatment," for example, in cases about pregnancy benefits or child custody. (Should pregnancy be defined as unique, requiring special legal provisions, or will pregnant women get more actual economic support if pregnancy, when incapacitating, is grouped with other temporary conditions that keep people from work? Should women who give birth and are almost always the ones who care for children therefore get an automatic preference in custody battles, or will women gain more ultimately if men are defined by law as equally responsible for children, hence equally eligible to be awarded custody?)[19] Sometimes activists find themselves pressured by events to pit the mainstreaming of information about women in the school curriculum against the need for separate programs for women's studies. Or they find themselves having to choose between working to get traditionally male jobs (for example in construction) and working to get fair pay in the women-only jobs they are already doing.

One rushes to respond that these strategic alternatives should not be mutually exclusive, but often, in the heat of local struggles, they temporarily become so. No matter what their theoretical position on the divide, activists find themselves having to make painfully unsatisfactory short-term decisions about the rival claims of equality and difference.[20]

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Regrettably, these definitions, these examples flatten out the oscillations of the equality-difference debate; they obscure the class struggles that have shaped the development of the argument; they offer neat parallels where there should be asymmetries. Viewed historically, the oscillation between a feminism of equality and one of difference is a bitter disagreement about which path is more progressive, more able to change women's basic condition of subordination.

In this history each side has taken more than one turn at calling the other reactionary and each has had its genuine vanguard moments. "Difference" gained some working women protection at a time when any social legislation to regulate work was rare, while "equality" lay behind middle-class women's demand for the vote, a drive Ellen DuBois has called "the most radical program for women's emancipation possible in the nineteenth century." At the same time, bourgeois women's demands that men should have to be as sexually pure as women finessed the divide between difference and equality and gave rise to interesting cross-class alliances of women seeking ways to make men conform to women's standard, rather than the usual way round—a notion of equality with a difference. As DuBois points out, it is difficult to decide which of these varied political constructions gave nineteenth-century women the most real leverage to make change:

> My hypothesis is that the significance of the woman suffrage movement rested precisely on the fact that it bypassed women's oppression within the family, or private sphere, and demanded instead her admission to citizenship, and through it admission to the public arena.[21]

In other words, at a time when criticism of women's separate family role was still unthinkable, imagining a place outside the family where such a role would make no difference was—for a time—a most radical act.

Equality and difference are broad ideas and have included a range of definitions and political expressions. Equality, for example, can mean anything from the mildest liberal reform (this is piece-of-the-pie feminism, in which women are merely to be included in the world as it is) to the most radical reduction of gender to insignificance. Difference can mean anything from Mary Daly's belief in the natural superiority of women to psychoanalytic theories of how women are inevitably cast as "the Other" because they lack penises.[22]

Just now equality—fresh from recent defeats at the polls and in the courts—is under attack by British and U.S. theorists who are developing a powerful critique of the eighteenth- and nineteenth-century roots of feminism in liberalism. In what is a growing body of work, feminists are exploring the serious limitations of a tradition based on an ideal of equality for separate, independent individuals acting in a free, public sphere—either the market or the state. This liberalism, which runs as an essential thread through Anglo-American feminism, has caused much disappointment. Feminists have become increasingly aware of its basic flaws, of the ways it splits off public and private, leaves sexual differences entirely out of its narrative of the world, and pretends to a neutrality that is nullified by the realities of gender, class, and race. A feminism that honors individual rights has grown leery of the liberal tradition that always puts those rights before community and before any caring for general needs. Liberalism promises an equal right to compete, but as Bell Hooks puts it: "Since men are not equals in white supremacist, capitalist, patriarchal class structure, which men do women want to be equal to?"[23]

These arguments against the origins and tendencies of equality feminism are cogent and useful. They have uncovered unexamined assumptions and the essential weakness in a demand for a passive neutrality of opportunity. But there are cracks in the critique of equality-feminism that lead me back to my general assertion that neither side of the divide can easily be transcended. The biggest complaint against a feminist demand of "equality" is that this construction means women must become conceptual men, or rather that to have equal rights they will have to repress their biological difference, to subordinate themselves in still new ways under an unchanged male hegemony.[24] In this argument the norm is assumed to be male and women's entry into public space is assumed to be a loss of the aspects of experience they formerly embodied—privacy, feeling, nur-

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turance, dailiness. Surely, though, this argument entails a monolithic and eternal view both of public space and of the category "male." How successfully does public space maintain its male gender markers, how totally exclude the private side of life? (The city street is male, yet it can at times be not only physically but also conceptually invaded, say, by a sense of neighborhood or by a demonstration of mass solidarity.) Does male space sometimes dramatically reveal the fact of women's absence? How well does the taboo on public women hold up under the multiple pressures of modernity? Even if public and private are conceptually absolutes, to what extent do individual men and women experience moments in both positions?

Or, if one rejects these hopeful efforts to find loopholes in the iron laws of gender difference, the fear that women will become men still deserves double scrutiny. Is the collapse of gender difference into maleness really the problem women face? Or are we perhaps quite close to men already at the moment when we fear absorption into the other?

None of this is meant as a refutation of the important current work that brings skepticism to the construction of our demands. When health activist Wendy Chavkin notes that making pregnancy disappear by calling it a "disability" is one more way of letting business and government evade sharing responsibility for reproduction, she is right to worry about the invisibility of women's bodies and of their work of reproduction of which their bodies are one small part. When philosopher Alison Jaggar gives examples of how male norms have buried the often separate needs of women, she is sounding a valuable warning. When critic Myra Jehlen describes how hard it is for the concept of a person to include the particular when that particular is female, she is identifying the depth of our difficulty, men's phobic resistance to the inclusion of women into any neutral or public equation.[25]

Nonetheless, I want to reanimate the problem of the divide, to show the potential vigor on both sides. On the one hand, an abstract promise of equality is not enough for people living in capitalism, where everyone is free both to vote and to starve. On the other, as Zillah Eisenstein has pointed out in *The Radical Future of Liberal Feminism,* the demand for equality has a radical meaning in a capitalist society that claims to offer it but structurally often denies it. Feminism asks for many things the patriarchal state cannot give without radical change. Juliet Mitchell's rethinking of the value of equality-feminism reaches a related conclusion: When basic rights are under attack, liberalism feels necessary again. At best, liberalism sometimes tips in action and becomes more radical than its root conceptions promise. Certainly, no matter which strategy we choose—based on a model of equality or of difference—we are constantly forced to compromise.[26]

It's not that we haven't gotten beyond classical liberalism in theory but that in practice we cannot *live* beyond it. In their very structure, contemporary court cases about sex and gender dramatize the fact of the divide, and media questions demand the short, one-sided answer. Each "case," each "story" in which we act is different and we are only at moments able to shape that difference, make it into the kind of "difference" we want.[27]

The Divide is Not a Universal

After having said so much about how deep the divide goes in feminism, how completely it defines what feminism *is*, I run the risk of seeming to say that the divide has some timeless essence. In fact, I want to argue the opposite, to place Western feminism inside its two-hundred-year history as a specific possibility for thought and action that arose as one of the possibilities of modernity.

When Mary Wollstonecraft wrote one of the founding books of feminism in 1792, *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman,* she said what was new then and remains fresh, shocking, and doubtful to many now: that sex hierarchy—like ranks in the church and the army or like the then newly contested ascendancy of kings—was social, not natural. Though women before her had named injustices and taken sides in several episodes of an ancient *querrelle des femmes,* Wollstonecraft's generation experienced the divide in ways related to how feminists experience it now. At one and the same time she could see gender as a solid wall barring her way into liberty, citizen-

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ship, and a male dignity she envied, and could see how porous the wall was, how many ways she herself could imagine stepping through into an identity less absolute and more chaotic.

Modern feminists often criticize her unhappy compromise with bourgeois revolution and liberal political goals, but if Wollstonecraft was often an equality-feminist in the narrowest sense, eager to speak of absolute rights, of an idealized male individualism, and to ignore the body, this narrowness was in part a measure of her desperation. The body, she felt, could be counted on to assert its ever-present and dreary pull; the enlightenment promised her a mind that might escape. She acknowledged difference as an absolute—men are stronger; then, with cunning, wheedling a bit, Wollstonecraft made men the modest proposal that if women are inferior, men have nothing to fear; they can generously afford to give women their little chance at the light.[28] This is a sly, agnostic treatment of the issue of equality versus difference. Experimental and groping spirit, Wollstonecraft *didn't know* how much biological difference might come to mean; but that she suffered humiliation and loss through being a woman she did know, and all she asked was to be let out of the prison house of gender identity for long enough to judge what men had and what part of that she might want.

When Wollstonecraft wrote, difference was the prevailing wind, equality the incipient revolutionary storm. She feared that if women could not partake in the new civil and political rights of democracy, they would "remain immured in their families groping in the dark." To be sure this rejection of the private sphere made no sense to many feminists who came after her and left modern feminists the task of recognizing the importance of the private and women's different life there, yet it is a rejection that was absolutely necessary as one of feminism's first moves. We in turn have rejected Wollstonecraft's call for chastity, for the end of the passionate emotions "which disturb the order of society";[29] we have rejected her confidence in objective reason and her desire to live as a disembodied self (and a very understandable desire, too, for one whose best friend died in childbirth and who was to die of childbed fever herself), but we have not gotten beyond needing to make the basic demands she made—for civil rights, education, autonomy.

Finally, what is extraordinary in *A Vindication* is its chaos. Multivalent, driven, ambivalent, the text races over most of feminism's main roads. It constantly goes back on itself in tone, thrilling with self-hatred, rage, disappointment, and hope—the very sort of emotions it explains are the mark of women's inferiority, triviality, and lascivious abandon. Though its appeals to God and virtue are a dead letter to feminists now, the anger and passion with which Wollstonecraft made those appeals—and out of which she imagined the depth of women's otherness, our forced incapacity, the injustice of our situation—feel thoroughly modern. Her structural disorganization derives in part from a circular motion through now familiar stages of protest, reasoning, fury, despair, contempt, desire. She makes demands for women, then doubles back to say that womanhood should be beside the point. Her book is one of those that mark the start of an avalanche of mass self-consciousness about gender injustice. So, in the midst of the hopeful excitement, the divide is there, at the beginning of our history.

If the divide is central to feminist history, feminists need to recognize it with more suppleness, but this enlarged perspective doesn't let one out of having to choose a position in the divide. On the contrary, by arguing that there is no imminent resolution, I hope to throw each reader back on the necessity of finding where her own work falls and of assessing how powerful that political decision is as a tool for undermining the dense, deeply embedded oppression of women.

Though it is understandable that we dream of peace among feminists, that we resist in sisterhood the factionalism that has so often disappointed us in brotherhood, still we must carry on the argument among ourselves. Better, we must actively embrace it. The tension in the divide, far from being our enemy, is a dynamic force that links very different women. Feminism encompasses central dilemmas in modern experience, mysteries of identity that get full

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expression in its debates. The electricity of its internal disagreements is part of feminism's continuing power to shock and involve large numbers of people in a public conversation far beyond the movement itself. The dynamic feminist divide is about difference; it dramatizes women's differences from each other—and the necessity of our sometimes making common cause.

A Gender Diary: Some Stories, Some Dialogues

If, as I've said, the divide offers no third way, no high ground of neutrality, I certainly have not been able to present this overview so far without a constant humming theme beneath, my own eagerness to break the category "woman" down, to find a definition of difference that pushes so far beyond a settled identity that "being a woman" breaks apart.

Though sometimes I have found the theoretical equality arguments I have described blinkered and reactive, when it comes to strategy, I almost always choose that side, fearing the romance of femaleness even more than the flatness and pretense of undifferentiated, gender-free public space.

I suspect that each one's emphasis—equality or difference—arises alongside and not after the reasons. We criticize Wollstonecraft's worship of rationality, but how willing are we modern ones to look at the unconscious, the idiosyncratic, the temperamental histories of our own politics? It is in these histories—private, intellectual and social—that we can find why some women feel safer with the equality model as the rock of their practice (with difference as a necessary condition imposed on it), while other women feel more true to themselves, more fully expressed, by difference as their rock (with equality a sort of bottom-line call for basic reforms that cannot ultimately satisfy).

Why do I decide (again and again) that being a woman is a liability, while others I know decide (again and again) that a separate female culture is more exciting, more in their interests, more promising as a strategic stance for now than my idea of slipping the noose of gender, living for precious moments of the imagination outside it? An obvious first answer is that class, race, and sexual preference determine my choices, and surely these play their central part. Yet in my experience of splits in the women's movement, I keep joining with women who share my feminist preferences but who have arrived at these conclusions from very different starting points.

This is not to understate the importance of class, race, and sexual preference but merely to observe that these important variables don't segment feminism along the divide; they don't provide direct keys to each one's sense of self-interest or desire nor do they yield clear directions for the most useful strategic moves. For example, lesbian and straight women are likely to bring very different understandings and needs to discussions of whether or not women's communities work, whether or not the concept is constricting. Yet in my own experience, trust of women's communities does not fall out along the lines of sexual preference. Instead, up close, the variables proliferate. What was the texture of childhood for each one of us? What face did the world beyond home present?

In the fifties, when an earlier, roiled life of gender and politics had subsided and the gender messages seemed monolithic again, I lived with my parents in the suburbs. My mother's class and generation had lived through repeated, basic changes of direction about women, family, and work, and my own engaged and curious mother passed her ambivalent reception of the world's mixed messages on to me in the food. With hindsight, I can see that of course gender, family, and class weren't the settled issues they seemed then. But the times put a convincing cover over continuing change. Deborah Rosenfelt and Judith Stacey describe this precise historical moment and the particular feminist politics born from it:

> [T]he ultradomestic nineteen fifties [was] an aberrant decade in the history of U.S. family and gender relations and one that has set the unfortunate terms for waves of personal and political reaction to family issues ever since. Viewed in this perspective, the attack on the breadwinner/homemaker nuclear family by the women's liberation movement may have been an overreaction to an aberrant and highly fragile

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> cultural form, a family system that, for other reasons, was already passing from the scene. Our devastating critiques of the vulnerability and cultural devaluation of dependent wives and mothers helped millions of women to leave or avoid these domestic traps, and this is to our everlasting credit. But, with hindsight, it seems to us that these critiques had some negative consequences as well. . . . [F]eminism's overreaction to the fifties was an antinatalist, antimaterialist moment. . . .[30]

I am the child of this moment, and some of the atmosphere of rage generated by that hysterically domestic ideology of the fifties can now feel callow, young, or ignorant. Yet I have many more kind words to say for the reaction of which I was a part in the early seventies than Rosenfelt and Stacey seem to: I don't think the feminism of this phase would have spoken so powerfully to so many without this churlish outbreak of indignation. Nothing we have learned since about the fragility of the nuclear family alters the fundamental problems it continues to pose for women. It is not really gone, though it is changing. And though feminism seeks to preside over the changes, other forces are at work, half the time threatening us with loneliness, half the time promising us rich emotional lives if we will but stay home—a double punch combination designed to make the fifties look, by contrast, safe. The fifties were not safe, not for me anyway, and they don't become so with hindsight.

It's hard to remember now what the initial feminist moves in this wave felt like, the heady but alarming atmosphere of female revolt. As one anxious friend wondered back then, "Can I be in this and stay married?" The answer was often "no," the upheaval terrifying. Some of us early ones were too afraid of the lives of our mothers to recognize ourselves in them. But I remember that this emotional throwing off of the mother's life felt like the only way to begin. Black women whose ties to their mothers were more often a mutual struggle for survival rarely shared this particular emotion. As Audre Lord once said, "[B]lack children were not meant to survive," so parents and children saw a lifeline in each other that was harder for the prosperous or the white to discern. The usually white and middle-class women who were typical members of early women's consciousness raising groups often saw their mothers as desperate or depressed in the midst of their relative privilege. Many had been educated like men and had then been expected to become . . . men's wives. We used to agree in those meetings that motherhood was the divide: Before it, you could pretend you were just like everyone else; afterward, you were a species apart—invisible and despised.

But if motherhood was despised, it was also festooned—then as now—with roses. Either way, in 1970, motherhood seemed an inevitable part of my future, and the qualities some feminists now praise as uniquely women's were taken for granted as female necessities: Everyone wanted the nice one, the sweet one, the good one, the nurturant one, the pretty one. No one wanted the women who didn't want to be women. It's hard to recover how frightening it was to step out of these ideas, to resist continuing on as expected; it's hard to get back how very naked it made us feel. Some of the vociferousness of our rhetoric, which now seems unshaded or raw, came partly from the anxiety we felt when we made this proclamation, that we didn't want to be women. A great wave of misogyny rose to greet us. So we said it even more. Hindsight has brought in its necessary wisdom, its temporizing reaction. We have gotten beyond the complaint of the daughters, have come to respect the realities, the worries, and the work of the mothers. But to me "difference" will always represent a necessary modification of the initial impulse, a reminder of complexity, a brake on precipitate hopes. It can never feel like the primary insight felt, the first breaking with the gender bargain. The immediate reward was immense, the thrill of separating from authority.

* * *

Conversation with E. She recalls that the new women's movement meant to her: You don't have to struggle to be attractive to men anymore. You can stop working so hard on that side of things. I was impressed by this liberation so much beyond my own. I felt the opposite. Oppressed and depressed before the movement, I found sexual power unthinkable, the privilege of a very few women. Now angry and awake, I felt for the first time what the

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active eroticism of men might be like. What men thought of me no longer blocked out the parallel question of what I thought of them, which made sexual encounters far more interesting than they had once been. Like E., I worried about men's approval less, but (without much tangible reason) my hopes for the whole business of men and women rose. For a brief time in the early seventies, I had an emotional intimation of what some men must feel: free to rub up against the world, take space, make judgments. With all its hazards, this confidence also offered its delight—but only for a moment of course. The necessary reaction followed at once: Women aren't men in public space. There is no safety. Besides, I had romanticized male experience; men are not as free as I imagined. Still, I remember that wild if deluded time—not wanting to be a man but wanting the freedom of the street. The feminist rallying cry "Take Back the Night" has always struck me as a fine piece of movement poetry. We don't have the night, but we want it, we want it.

* * *

Another memory of the early seventies: An academic woman sympathetic to the movement but not active asked what motivated me to spend all this time organizing, marching, meeting. (Subtext: Why wasn't I finishing my book? Why did I keep flinging myself around?)

I tried to explain the excitement I felt at the idea that I didn't have to be a woman. She was shocked, confused. This *was the motor of my activism? She asked, "How can someone who doesn't like being a woman be a feminist?" To which I could only answer, "Why would anyone who likes being a woman* need *to be a feminist?"*

Quite properly, my colleague feared woman-hating. She assumed that feminism must be working to restore respect and dignity to women. Feminism would revalue what had been debased, women's contribution to human history. I, on the other hand, had to confess: I could never have made myself lick all those stamps for a better idea of what womanhood means. Was this, as my colleague thought, just a new kind of misogyny? I wouldn't dare say self-hatred played no part in what I wanted from feminism from the first. But even back then, for me, woman-hating—or loving—felt beside the point. It was the idea of breaking the law of the category itself that made me delirious.

* * *

The first time I heard "women" mentioned as a potentially political contemporary category I was already in graduate school. It was the mid-sixties and a bright young woman of the New Left was saying how important it was to enlist the separate support of women workers in our organizing against the Vietnam War. I remember arguing with her, flushed with a secret humiliation. What good was she doing these workers, I asked her, by addressing them and categorizing them separately? Who was she to speak so condescendingly of "them"? Didn't she know that the inferior category she had named would creep up in the night and grab her, too?

I'm ashamed now to admit that gender solidarity—which I lived inside happily, richly every day in those years—first obtruded itself on my conscious mind as a threat and a betrayal. So entirely was I trapped in negative feelings about what women are and can do that I had repressed any knowledge of femaleness as a defining characteristic of my being.

I can see now that women very different from me came to feminist conclusions much like my own. But this is later knowledge. My feminism came from the suburbs, where I knew no white, middle-class woman with children who had a job or any major activities beyond the family. Yet, though a girl, I was promised education, offered the pretense of gender neutrality. This island of illusions was a small world, but if I seek the source for why cultural feminism has so little power to draw me, it is to this world I return in thought. During the day, it was safe, carefully limited, and female. The idea that this was all made me frantic.

* * *

S. reads the gender diary with consternation. In Puerto Rico, where she grew up, this fear of the mother's life would be an obscenity. She can't recognize the desire I write of—to escape scot free from the role I was born to. Latina feminists she knows feel rage, but what is this shame, *she wants to know. In her childhood both sexes believed being a woman was magic.*

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S. means it about the magic, hard as it is for me to take this in. She means sexual power, primal allure, even social dignity. S. became a feminist later, by a different route, and now she is as agnostic about the meaning of gender as I am. But when she was young, she had no qualms about being a woman.

After listening to S., I add another piece to my story of the suburbs. Jews who weren't spending much of our time being Jewish, we lived where ethnicity was easy to miss. (Of course it was there; *but I didn't know it.) In the suburbs, Motherhood was white bread, with no powerful ethnic graininess. For better and worse, I was brought up on this stripped, denatured product. Magical women seemed laughably remote. No doubt this flatness in local myth made girls believe less in their own special self, but at the same time it gave them less faith in the beckoning ideal of mother. My gifted mother taught me not the richness of home but the necessity of feminism. Feminism was her conscious as well as unconscious gift.*

* * *

It is not enough for the diary to tell how one woman, myself, came to choose—again and again—a feminism on the minimalizers' side of the divide. Somehow the diary must also tell how this decision can never feel solid or final. No one gets to stay firmly on her side; no one gets to rest in a reliably clear position. Mothers who believe their daughters should roam as free as men find themselves giving those daughters taxi fare, telling them not to talk to strangers, filling them with the lore of danger. Activists who want women to be very naughty (as the women in a little zap group we call No More Nice Girls want women to be) nonetheless warn them there's a price to pay for daring to defy men in public space.[31] Even when a woman chooses which shoes she'll wear today—is it to be the running shoes, the flats, the spikes?—she's deciding where to place herself for the moment on the current possible spectrum of images of "woman." Whatever one's habitual position on the divide, in daily life one travels back and forth, or, to change metaphors, one scrambles for whatever toe-hold one can.

* * *

Living with the divide: In a room full of feminists, everyone is saying that a so-called surrogate mother, one who bears a child for others, should have the right to change her mind for a time (several weeks? months?) after the baby is born. This looks like agreement. Women who have been on opposite sides of the divide in many struggles converge here, outraged at the insulting way one Mary Beth Whitehead has been treated by fertility clinics, law courts, and press. She is not a "surrogate," we say, but a "mother" indeed.

The debate seems richer than it's been lately. Nobody knows how to sort out the contradictions of the new reproductive technologies yet, so for a fertile moment there's a freedom, an expressiveness in all that's said. Charged words like "birth" and "mothering" and "the kids" are spilling all around, but no one yet dares to draw the ideological line defining which possibilities belong inside feminism, which are antithetical to it. Some sing a song of pregnancy and birth while others offer contrapuntal motifs of child-free lesbian youth, of infertility, all in different keys of doubt about how much feminists may want to make motherhood special, different from parenting, different from caring—a unique and absolute relation to a child.

But just as we're settling in for an evening that promises to be fraught, surprising, suggestive, my warning system, sensitive after eighteen years of feminist activism, gives a familiar twitch and tug. Over by the door, one woman has decided: Surrogacy is baby-selling and ought to be outlawed. All mothering will be debased if motherhood can be bought. Over by the couch, another woman is anxiously responding: Why should motherhood be the sacred place we keep clean from money, while men sell the work of their bodies every day? Do we want women to be the special representatives of the moral and spiritual things that can't be bought, with the inevitable result that women's work is once again done without pay?

Here it is then. The metaconversation that has hovered over my political life since 1970, when I joined one of the first women's consciousness raising groups. On the one hand, sacred motherhood. On the other, a

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wish—variously expressed—for this special identity to wither away.

Only a little later in the brief, eventful history of this ad hoc Mary Beth Whitehead support group, a cleverly worded petition was circulated. It quoted the grounds the court used to disqualify Whitehead from motherhood—from the way she dyed her hair to the way she played pattycake—and ended: "By these standards, we are all unfit mothers." I wanted to sign the petition, but someone told me, "Only mothers are signing." I was amazed. Did one have to be literally *a mother in order to speak authentically in support of Whitehead? Whether I'm a mother or not, the always obvious fact that I am from the mother half of humanity conditions my life.*

But after this initial flash of outrage at exclusion, I had second thoughts: Maybe I should be glad *not to sign. Why should I have to be assumed to be a mother if I am not? Instead of accepting that all women are mothers in essence if not in fact, don't I prefer a world in which some are mothers—and can speak as mothers—while others are decidedly not?*

To make a complicated situation more so: While I was struggling with the rights and wrongs of my being allowed to sign, several other women refused *to sign. Why? Because the petition quoted Whitehead's remark that she knew what was best for her child* because she was the mother. *The nonsigners saw this claim as once again imputing some magic biological essence to motherhood. They didn't want to be caught signing a document that implied that mother always knows best. They supported Whitehead's right to dye her hair but not her claim to maternal infallibility.*

I saw the purity of this position, recognized these nonsigners as my closest political sisters, the ones who run fast because the old world of mother-right is just behind them. But in this case I didn't feel quite as they felt. I was too angry at the double standard, the unfair response to Whitehead's attempts to extricate herself from disaster. I thought that given the circumstances of here, of now, Mary Beth Whitehead was as good an authority about her still-nursing baby as we could find anywhere in the situation. It didn't bother me at all to sign a petition that included her claim to a uniquely privileged place. The press and the court seemed to hate her for that very specialness; yet they all relegated her to it, execrating her for her unacceptable ambivalence. Under such conditions she was embracing with an understandable vengeance the very role the world named as hers. Who could blame her?

Eventually, I signed the petition, which was also signed by a number of celebrities and was much reported in the press. It is well to remember how quickly such public moments flatten out internal feminist debates. After much feminist work, the newspapers—formerly silent about feminism's stake in surrogacy questions—began speaking of "the feminist position." But nothing they ever wrote about us or our petition came close to the dilemma as we had debated it during the few intense weeks we met. Prosurrogacy and antisurrogacy positions coexist inside feminism. They each require expression, because neither alone can respond fully to the class, race, and gender issues raised when a poor woman carries a child for a rich man for money.

Over time I've stopped being depressed by the lack of feminist accord. I see feminists as stuck with the very indeterminacy I say I long for. This is it then, the life part way in, part way out. One can be recalled to "woman" anytime—by things as terrible as rape, as trivial as a rude shout on the street—but one can never stay inside "woman," because it keeps moving. We constantly find ourselves beyond its familiar cover.

Gender markers are being hotly reasserted these days—U.S. defense is called "standing tough" while the Pope's letter on women calls motherhood woman's true vocation. Yet this very heat is a sign of gender's instabilities. We can clutch aspects of the identity we like, but they often slip away. Modern women experience moments of free fall. How is it for you, there, out in space near me? Different, I know. Yet we share—some with more pleasure, some with more pain—this uncertainty. □

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Notes

[1] The "we" problem has no more simple solution than does the divide itself, but in spite of its false promise of unity the "we" remains politically important. In this piece, "we" includes anyone who calls herself a feminist, anyone who is actively engaged with the struggles described here.

[2] Catharine R. Stimpson, "The New Scholarship about Women: The State of the Art," *Ann. Scholarship* 1, no. 2(1980):2–14.

[3] Alice B. Echols, *Daring to Be Bad: A History of the Radical Feminist Movement in America, 1967–1975* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, forthcoming). The quotations from Echols that follow are from chapters II and VI.

[4] Barbara Deming, "To Those Who Would Start a People's Party," *Liberation* 18, no. 4 (December 1973): 24, cited in Echols, Chapter VI. Andrea Dworkin, *Intercourse* (New York: The Free Press, 1987), p. 67. Dworkin is not a biological determinist in *Intercourse*, but she sees culture as so saturated with misogyny that the victimization of women is seamless, total, as eternal in its own way as "mother right."

[5] Carole S. Vance, "Social Construction Theory: Problems in the History of Sexuality," in *Homosexuality, Which Homosexuality?* ed. Anja von Kooten Niekerk and Theo van der Meer (Amsterdam: An Dekker, Imprint Schorer, forthcoming).

[6] Linda Alcoff, *Signs* 13, no. 3 (Spring 1988): 406, and passim.

[7] Linda Alcoff sees poststructuralism as anti-essentialist; in contrast, in *Feminist Studies* 14, no. 1 (Spring 1988), the editors Judith Newton and Nancy Hoffman introduce a collection of essays on deconstruction by describing differences *among* deconstructionists on the question of essentialism as on other matters.

[8] See "Politics of the Ego: A Manifesto for N.Y. Radical Feminists" in *Radical Feminism*, ed. Anne Koedt, Ellen Levine, Anita Rapone. (New York: Quadrangle, 1973):379–383. The vocabulary of the manifesto, adopted in December 1969, seems crude now, its emphasis on "psychology" jejune; but the document begins upon the task which feminists have taken up since, the analysis of the interlocking ways in which culture organizes subordination.

[9] Linda Bamber and Marianne DeKoven, "Metacriticism and the Value of Difference" (paper presented at the MLA panel "Feminist Criticism: Theories and Directions," December 28, 1982), pp. 1–2.

[10] Alcoff, 421. One might make a separate study of "third course" thinking. Sometimes this work is an important and urgent effort to see the limiting terms of a current contradiction, to recognize from which quarter new contradictions are likely to develop. Third-course writing at its best tries to reinterpret the present and offer clues to the future. (English theorists have called this prefigurative thinking.) But often this work runs the risk of pretending that new terms resolve difficulties and, more insidiously, it often falls back covertly into the divide it claims to have transcended. I admire, though I am not always persuaded by, the third course thinking in such pieces as Angela Miles, "The Integrative Feminine Principle in North American Radicalism: Value Basis of a New Feminism," *Women's Studies International Quarterly* 4, no. 4 (1981):481–95. I have more doubts about pieces like Ann Ferguson's and Ilene Philipson's contributions to "Forum: The Feminist Sexuality Debates," *Signs* 10, no. 1 (Autumn 1984): 106–118. These essays claim a higher ground, "a third perspective" (Ferguson, p. 108), which is extremely difficult to construct; their classifications of the sides of the divide reveal a tropism more unavoidable than they recognize.

[11] Michèle Barrett, "The Concept of 'Difference,'" *Feminist Review* 26 (Summer 1987):34.

[12] Alice Walker, Epigraph of *In Search of Our Mothers' Gardens* (San Diego: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1983), p. xi. See also Joan Kelly, "The Doubled Vision of Feminist Theory," in *Women, History and Theory: The Essays of Joan Kelly* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1984), p. 55; Denise Riley, *War in the Nursery: Theories of the Child and Mother* (London: Virago, 1983): passim and Adrienne Rich, "Compulsory Heterosexuality and Lesbian Existence" in *Blood, Bread and Poetry* (New York: W.W. Norton, 1986):60 ff. Rich also uses the metaphor of the continuum to describe the range in women's lives between different levels of female community. In *The Daughter's Seduction: Feminism and Psychoanalysis* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1982), Jane Gallop describes Julia Kristeva's effort to think beyond dualism: "A constantly double discourse is necessary, one that asserts and then questions" (p. 122).

[13] Meredith Tax, "Agenda for Meeting at Barnard, May 3, 1986," p. 1. Members of the study group, convened at the Barnard Women's Center: Margorie Agosin, Amrita Basu, Dana Frank, Temma Kaplan, Ynestra King, Marysa Navarro, Ann Snitow, Amy Swerdlow, Meredith Tax, Julie Wells, and Marilyn Young.

[14] See Mrinalini Sinha, "The Age of Consent Act: The Ideal of Masculinity and Colonial Ideology in Late 19th Century Bengal," *Proceedings of the 8th International Symposium on Asian Studies*, 1986, pp. 1199–1214, and "Gender and Imperialism: Colonial Policy and The Ideology of Moral Imperialism in Late Nineteenth-Century Bengal" in *Changing Men: New Directions in Research on Men and Masculinity*, ed. Michael S. Kimmel (Newbury Park, Calif.: Sage Publications, 1987), pp. 217–31.

[15] Julie Wells and Anne McClintock offered the example

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of Crossroads in South Africa, a squatter community of blacks largely maintained by women but finally undermined by—among other things—a colonialism that placed paid black men in charge. See also descriptions of ways in which women become connected with revolutionary movements in Maxine Molyneux, "Mobilization Without Emancipation? Women's Interests, the State, and Revolution in Nicaragua," *Feminist Studies* 11, no. 2 (Summer 1985):227–53; and Temma Kaplan, "Women and Communal Strikes in the Crisis of 1917–1922," in *Becoming Visible: Women in European History,* 2nd edition, ed. Renate Bridenthal, Claudia Koonz, and Susan Stuard, (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1987), pp. 429–49 and Kaplan, "Female Consciousness and Collective Action: The Case of Barcelona, 1910–1918," *Signs* 7, no. 3 (1982):545–66.

[16] See also Julie Wells, "The Impact of Motherist Movements on South African Women's Political Participation." Paper presented at the Seventh Berkshire Conference on the History of Women, June 19, 1987.

[17] Alison M. Jaggar gives an account of the contemporary feminist debate about the demand for "equality" in "Sexual Difference and Sexual Equality," in *Theoretical Perspectives on Sexual Differences*, ed. Deborah L. Rhode (New Haven: Yale University Press, forthcoming). For some general accounts of the debate, see also Josephine Donovan, *Feminist Theory* (New York: Frederick Ungar, c1985); Hester Eisenstein, *Contemporary Feminist Thought* (Boston: G.K. Hall, 1983); Hester Eisenstein and Alice Jardine, ed. *The Future of Difference* (Boston: G.K. Hall, 1980); Zillah R. Eisenstein, *Feminism and Sexual Equality: Crisis in Liberal America* (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1984); Juliet Mitchell, *Women's Estate* (New York: Pantheon, 1971); *What is Feminism?* Juliet Mitchell and Ann Oakley, eds. (New York: Pantheon, 1986). The debates about Carol Gilligan's *In a Different Voice: Psychological Theory and Women's Development* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1982) often turn on the equality/difference problem. See John Broughton, "Women's Rationality and Men's Virtues: A Critique of Gender Dualism in Gilligan's Theory of Moral Development," *Social Research* 50, no. 3 (Autumn 1983):597–624; Linda K. Kerber, Catherine G. Greeno and Eleanor E. Maccoby, Zella Luria, Carol B. Stack, and Carol Gilligan, "On *In a Different Voice:* An Interdisciplinary Forum," *Signs* 11, no. 2 (Winter 1986): 304–333; *New Ideas in Psychology* (Special Issue on Women and Moral Development) 5, no. 2 (1987); and Seyla Benhabib, "The Generalized and the Concrete Other: The Kohlberg-Gilligan Controversy and Feminist Theory," in *Feminism as Critique,* ed. Seyla Benhabib and Drucilla Cornell (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1987). Similarly, the feminist response to Ivan Illich's *Gender* (New York: Pantheon, 1982) has tended to raise these issues. See, for example, Lourdes Beneria, "Meditations on Ivan Illich's *Gender,*" in *Work in the 1980s,* ed. B. Gustavsson, J.C. Karlsson and C. Rafregard (Gower Publishing Co., 1985).

[18] The phrase "human wholeness" comes from Betty Friedan's *The Second Stage* (New York: Summit Books, 1981), and the concept receives a valuable and devastating critique in Myra Jehlen, "Against Human Wholeness: A Suggestion for a Feminist Epistemology" (manuscript).

[19] For pregnancy issue see: "Brief of the American Civil Liberties Union et al.," amici curiae, California Federal Savings and Loan Association, et al., v. Mark Guerra, et al., Supreme Court of the United States, October Term, 1985, Joan E. Bertin, Counsel of record; Wendy Chavkin, "Walking a Tightrope: Pregnancy, Parenting, and Work," in *Double Exposure: Women's Health Hazards on the Job and at Home,* ed. Wendy Chavkin (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1984); Lise Vogel, "Debating Difference: The Problem of Special Treatment of Pregnancy in the Workplace," paper presented at the Women and Society Seminar of Columbia University, January 25, 1988; Kai Bird and Max Holland, "Capitol Letter: The Garland Case," *The Nation* (July 5/12, 1986); Wendy Williams, "Equality's Riddle: Pregnancy and the Equal Treatment/Special Treatment Debate," *N.Y.U. Review of Law and Social Change* 13 (1984–1985); Herma Hill Kay, "Equality and Difference: The Case of Pregnancy," *Berkeley Women's Law Journal* 1 (1985). For custody issue see: Katharine T. Bartlett and Carol B. Stack, "Joint Custody, Feminism and the Dependency Dilemma," *Berkeley Women's Law Journal*, Winter 1986–7:501–533; Phyllis Chesler, *Mothers on Trial: The Battle for Children and Custody* (Seattle: The Seal Press, 1986, 1987); and Lenore J. Weitzman, *The Divorce Revolution: The Unexpected Social and Economic Consequences for Women and Children in America* (New York: Macmillan, 1985). The work of Nadine Taub, Director of the Women's Rights Litigation Clinic, School of Law, Rutgers/Newark, has frequent bearing on both issues and on the larger questions in equality/difference debates. See Taub, "Defining and Combating Sexual Harassment," in *Class, Race and Sex: The Dynamics of Control,* ed. Amy Swerdlow and Hannah Lessinger (Boston: G.K. Hall, 1983), pp. 263–275; "Feminist Tensions: Concepts of Motherhood and Reproductive Choice," *Gender and Transition,* forthcoming; "A Public Policy of Private Caring," *The Nation* (May 31, 1986); Taub and Wendy Williams, "Will Equality Require More than Assimilation, Accommodation or Separation from the Existing Social Structure?" *Rutgers Law Review* 37, no. 4 (Summer 1985):825–44. The burgeoning feminist work on the new reproductive technologies also reproduces the divide. For complete references to all aspects of these debates see Nadine Taub and Sherrill Cohen, *Reproductive Laws for the 1990s,* (Clifton, N.J.: Humana Press, 1989).

[20] If I had to come up with an example of a feminist strategy that faced the power of the divide squarely yet at the same time undermined the oppression the divide represents, I'd choose recent feminist comparable worth legislation. Humble—and earthshaking—comparable worth asserts two things: First, since women and men do different work, the concept "equal pay" has little effect on raising women's low wages; and, second, if work were to be judged by standards of difficulty, educational preparation, experience, etc. (standards preferably developed by workers themselves), then anti-discrimination laws might

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enforce that men and women doing work of comparable worth be paid the same. (Perhaps nurses and automechanics. Or teachers and middle managers?) The activists who have proposed comparable worth have singularly few pretensions. They are the first to point out that on its face, the proposal ignores the work women do in the family, ignores the noneconomic reasons why women and men have different kinds of jobs, ignores what's wrong with job hierarchies and with "worth" as the sole basis for determining pay. Yet this little brown mouse of a liberal reform, narrow in its present political potential and limited by its nature, has a touch of deconstructive genius. Without hoping to get women doing men's work tomorrow, the comparable worth model erodes the economic advantages to employers of consistently undervaluing women's work and channeling women into stigmatized work ghettos where pay is always lower. With comparable worth, the stigma might well continue to haunt women's work, but women would be better paid. Men might start wanting a "woman's" job that paid well, while women might have new psychological incentives to cross gender work categories. Who knows, perhaps stigma might not catch up as categories of work got rethought and their gender markers moved around. And if the stigma clung to women's work, if men refused to be nurses even if nurses were paid as well as construction workers, a woman earning money is an independent woman; she can change the family; she can consider leaving it. Comparable worth asserts the divide; yet, slyly, it goes to work on a basic economic and psychological underpining of the divide; it undermines the idea that all work has a natural gender. (See Sara M. Evans and Barbara Nelson, *Wage Justice: Comparable Worth and the Paradox of Technocratic Reform* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1989). The mixtures of progressive and conservative impulses that have characterized both sides of the divide at different moments get a nuanced reading from Nancy F. Cott in her historical study of American feminism, *The Grounding of Modern Feminism* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1987).

[21] Ellen Dubois, "The Radicalism of the Women Suffrage Movement: Notes Toward the Reconstruction of Nineteenth-Century Feminism," in *Feminism and Equality*, ed. Anne Phillips (New York: New York University Press, 1987), p. 128.

[22] See Mary Daly, *Gyn/Ecology: The Metaethics of Radical Feminism* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1978). Maggie McFadden gives an account of this range in her useful taxonomy piece, "Anatomy of Difference: Toward a Classification of Feminist Theory," *Women's Studies International Forum* 7, no. 6 (1984):495–504. Adrienne Harris has pointed out to me that essentialism comes and goes in feminist psychoanalytic discussions of the penis: "The concept slips, moves and breaks apart."

[23] Bell Hooks, "Feminism: A Movement to End Sexist Oppression," in Phillips, *Feminism and Equality*, p. 62.

[24] Taken together, Alison Jaggar's essays on the equality/difference debate offer a poignant (and I think continuously ambivalent) personal account of how one feminist theorist developed doubts about the equality position. See Jaggar, "Sexual Difference and Sexual Equality: Sex Inequality and Bias in Sex Differences Research," *Canadian Journal of Philosophy*, Supplementary Vol. 13 (1987).

[25] For Chavkin, Jaggar and Jehlen, see notes 17, 18, 19 and 24 above.

[26] Eisenstein (New York: Longman, 1981); Mitchell, "Women and Equality" (1976), reprinted in Phillips.

[27] The feminist scandal of the Sears case offers a particularly disturbing example of the divide as it can get played out within the exigencies of a court case. See Ruth Milkman, "Women's History and the Sears Case," *Feminist Studies* 12 (Summer 1986):375–400 and Joan W. Scott, "Deconstructing Equality-Versus-Difference: Or the Uses of Poststructural Theory for Feminism," *Feminist Studies* 14, no. 1 (Spring 1988):33–50. In her introduction to *Feminism and Equality*, Anne Phillips offers a useful instance of how, in different contexts, the feminist ambivalence about liberalism emerges; she observes that in the United States feminism began with equality models which revealed their inadequacy in practice, while British feminists began with a socialist critique of liberal goals which their own disappointments have modified in the equality direction.

[28] Mary Wollstonecraft, *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman*, ed. Carol H. Poston (New York: W.W. Norton, 1975). See, for example, p. 35. See the now classic restoration of Wollstonecraft, Juliet Mitchell, "Women and Equality," in Phillips and two more recent, subtle readings of Wollstonecraft, Patricia Yeager, "Writing as Action: *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman*," *The Minnesota Review* no. 29 (Winter 1987):67–80, and Cora Kaplan, "Wild nights: pleasure/sexuality/feminism" (1983), reprinted in *The Ideology of Conduct: Essays on Literature and the History of Sexuality*, ed. Nancy Armstrong and Leonard Tennenhouse (New York and London: Methuen, 1987), pp. 160–184.

[29] Wollstonecraft, *A Vindication*, pp. 5, 30.

[30] Deborah Rosenfelt and Judith Stacey, "Second Thoughts on the Second Wave," *Feminist Studies* 13, no. 2 (Summer 1987):350–351.

[31] Since the Hyde Amendment restricting Medicaid abortions in 1979, No More Nice Girls has done occasional, ad hoc street events in New York City to dramatize new threats to women's sexual autonomy.

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Robert Kuttner

SLOUCHING TOWARD PLURALISM

An End to "The American Century"?

There is now widespread concern about the tension between America's economic interests and its continued geopolitical role as "hegemon" of the world system. At the simplest level this tension is embodied in the escalating gap between the cost of policing the world and the resources of the U.S. economy, an economy that no longer looms as large as it once did. The dynamics of this problem, of course, are far more subtle and complex than merely the price tag of serving as global policeman. For example, a review of recent U.S. economic diplomacy makes it painfully clear that the primacy of the cold war in U.S. diplomatic goals, combined with America's relentless advocacy of a laissez-faire system, make it very difficult for the U.S. to advance (or even to coherently define) its narrower economic goals as a nation.

Other nations tolerate American hegemony as long as it serves their economic interests. But this logic forces the United States to subordinate its own national goals to "system goals" such as holding the Western alliance together, maintaining the constituency for liberal trade, or rallying support for the laissez-faire view on refinancing Third World debt. This liability has been especially pronounced in U.S.-Japan diplomacy, where the combination of fealty to open markets and fear of Japan's slipping out of America's orbit have all but paralyzed U.S. negotiating capacity on trade and industrial objectives.

The world system is evolving from a bilateral one, whose capitalist half was dominated both politically and economically by the United States, into a more multilateral one reminiscent of the nineteenth-century European concert. Ideology, domestic politics, international economics, and global geopolitics now interact in complex and poorly understood ways. A more pluralist world offers both risks and gains. The emerging system may be less stable (the bipolar system of the cold war wasn't all that stable anyway), but the freeing of the United States to pursue national economic and social goals could be a welcome respite from the demands of hegemony. On the other hand, the very internationalization of the world economy under laissez-faire auspices makes the system more anarchic. It also becomes far more difficult to strike equitable social contracts at home, of the sort that flourished during the social democratic golden age, in which the Western democracies were able to build mixed economies sheltered by relative autarky.

For now the anomalous emergence of Japan and Germany as economic giants while remaining geopolitical pygmies and the converse position of the United States as hegemon-in-decline have created a kind of gridlock. Militarily, no other nation is capable of leading the Western alliance. Economically, Germany and Japan, despite their economic might, have been slow to let the yen and the deutsche mark play the financial role of reserve currencies that might lead to a genuine tripartite world economic order. As disgraced former Axis powers, they have been slower still to flex their economic muscles in the geopolitical realm via Gaullist-type independent foreign policies. Thus, the United States has continued in the role of hegemon: military protector and economic arbiter of the capitalist world—at escalating cost to its own economic health.

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The sudden prospect of détente with the East further complicates this picture, for it invites Western Europe and Japan to effect their own rapprochement with the USSR and Eastern Europe. This prospect appalls Washington, whose leadership is predicated on the value of its military protectorate to Japan and Western Europe. As détente becomes more likely, the United States finds it even harder to pursue its own economic self-interest within the noncommunist economic and political alliance, lest Tokyo and Bonn cease behaving as loyal client states. In short, the domestic costs of American hegemony grow ever greater. As Paul Kennedy wrote in *The Rise and Fall of the Great Powers*:

> It has been a common dilemma facing previous "number one" countries that even as their relative economic strength is ebbing, the growing foreign challenges to their position have compelled them to allocate more and more of their resources into the military sector, which in turn squeezes out productive investment and, over time, leads to the downward spiral of slower growth, heavier taxes, deepening domestic splits over spending priorities, and a weakening capacity to bear the burdens of defense.

For the first 150 years of its existence, the United States mightily resisted the complications of global entanglement. But hegemony, once tasted, proves very difficult to give up, even as its fiscal and economic costs increase. The continuing reign of the weakened dollar, for example, offers benefits not available to any other nation. Uniquely, the United States can incur foreign debts in its own currency, and then, at its pleasure, devalue that currency, effectively devaluing the debt. We continue to enjoy disproportionate influence in such economic institutions as the International Monetary Fund (IMF), World Bank, General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT), and so on, and in the councils of the cold war as well. Renouncing economic and geopolitical leadership would subject the United States to the same disciplines endured by lesser nations. Of course, events are gradually pushing the United States in that direction in any case. But if we relinquish power kicking and screaming, we probably will pay a far greater price than if we relinquish power gracefully.

Books Discussed in this Essay

Michael C. Aho and Marc Levinson, *After Reagan: Confronting the Changed Global Economy*. New York: Council on Foreign Relations, 1988. 231 pp.

C. Fred Bergsten, *America in the World Economy: A Strategy for the 1990s*. Washington: Institute for International Economics, 1988. 218 pp.

David Calleo, *Beyond American Hegemony: The Future of the Western Alliance*. New York: Basic Books, 1987. 288 pp.

Yoichi Funabashi, *Managing the Dollar: From the Plaza to the Louvre*. Washington: Institute for International Economics, 1988. 293 pp.

Robert Gilpin, *The Political Economy of International Relations*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1987. 450 pp.

Paul Kennedy, *The Rise and Fall of the Great Powers*. New York: Random House, 1987. 678 pp.

Walter Russell Mead, *Mortal Splendor: The American Empire in Transition*. Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1987. 381 pp.

Clyde Prestowitz, *Trading Places: How We Allowed Japan to Take the Lead*. New York: Basic Books, 1988. 365 pp.

Richard Rosecrance, *The Rise of the Trading State: Commerce and Conquest in the Modern World*. New York: Basic Books, 1986. 268 pp.

This general dilemma—the tension between America's geopolitical goals and its economic health—has been widely remarked by commentators of diverse ideological and philosophical orientations. Yet its perceived dynamics and possible solutions vary widely according to the stance of the observer. Professor Kennedy's 678-page tome was a surprise bestseller of 1988. Kennedy's basic point, distilled from a five hundred-year sweep of great-power political and economic history, is that differentials in growth rates inevitably shift power balances and that great nations get into difficulty when the costs of maintaining empire outrun their economic resources. His subtext is that laissez-faire nations generally outperform statist ones. The main explanation for the book's surprising

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vogue must be that both points touched quivering nerves. Philosophically, Kennedy is something of a nineteenth-century liberal. He has a soft spot for the Cobdenite view that military adventurism is bad for business and that the cross-national linkages of *doux commerce* damp down the risk of war. In this respect he is rather at odds with Reagan-style conservatism, which marries a hard military line with an embrace of Adam Smith. Yet even Reaganites have concerns about the costs of what Kennedy calls "imperial overstretch"—a problem common to Bourbon Spain, Hapsburg Austria, Edwardian Britain, Nazi Germany, and post–Postwar America.

Thus synthesized in a single paragraph, Kennedy's book seems like a splendid prologue to contemporary debate. I suspect, however, that *Rise and Fall,* last year's must-read for aspiring global political economists, gathered dust on a great many coffee tables. Despite being lionized by reviewers—the N.Y. *Times* celebrated its "Toynbeean sweep"—most of the book is a disappointing slog. For the most part, it adds a fairly thin economic overlay to standard political history. Ironically, Kennedy states in his preface that his original intent was to write a short "essayistic" (his word) book but that he couldn't resist fleshing out the historical references. The original impulse was correct. If you've taken a good modern world history course, nearly all of the first half of the book will be old hat. Kennedy offers numbing detail about Hapsburgs, Huguenots. Hohenzollerns, and the usual European wars, but at the breathless pace of one hundred pages per century he is both too detailed and too general. When Kennedy turns to the interplay of economics and geopolitics, his hypothesis is substantially tautological: If an imperial power ultimately faded, it must have overstretched, musn't it?

Kennedy has a weakness for tinny phrase-making. "From time to time," he avers, "the less percipient leaders . . . would virtually kill the goose that laid the golden eggs; but the consequent decline in wealth, and thus in military power, was soon obvious to all but the most purblind." The manuscript is full of "purblind" people. Kennedy is very fond of a giant bellows as an economic metaphor, sucking in capital and fanning economic activity, or whatever. The first time the reader encounters Kennedy's bellows, it seems quite ingenious. By the fourth variation several hundred pages later, it seems less a bellows than a windbag. When he at last gets to the twentieth century, Kennedy provides useful (though fairly standard) statistical and narrative comparisons of the economic capacities of the great powers. But his canvas is so broad that, once again, most of his specifics are all too familiar. We learn that Bismarck was far less threatening to the balance of power than Hitler, that the First World War exhausted Britain and France, that Victorian England exported capital rather than goods, that the Allies' triumph reflected their superior productive capacity. To be sure, the book includes an exhaustive bibliography and some satisfying new morsels, but Toynbeean it isn't.

Most disappointingly, Kennedy's concluding analysis of just how military goals subvert economic ones is abbreviated and one dimensional. At bottom his only point is that a military machine is very expensive. What is left out is either an analytic discussion of all the other ways in which hegemonic status paradoxically undermines the hegemon or reporting on the specific dynamics of how this paradox operates.

Those who got a B or better in World History may wish to skip to the next-level course, beginning with Robert Gilpin's fine *The Political Economy of International Relations* and Richard Rosecrance's *The Rise of the Trading State*. Gilpin, like Kennedy, offers a quasi-textbook, but a more instructive and original one. Where Kennedy's method is historical, Gilpin examines the economic logic of the international system: the coexistence of state and market, the appeal of rival Marxian, liberal, and nationalist interpretations, the emerging role of multinational corporations, the politics of trade and global finance, and so on.

Gilpin advises us to look at international political economy both from the perspective of the system as a whole and from the vantage point of the nation-state. Until recently there

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was a tendency for Americans in particular to fuse (and confuse) those two perspectives, because the extraordinary dominance of the United States made the global capitalist system virtually an American system. But as Gilpin and others observe, the U.S.-dominated postwar system is unraveling. America's inevitable relative decline reflects what a number of other scholars, beginning with Charles P. Kindleberger, have analyzed as the paradox of hegemony. The hegemonic nation—Britain in the mid-nineteenth century, the United States in the late twentieth—stabilizes the global system and enjoys many perquisites of its preeminence, but ultimately the hegemonic role undermines the economic standing of the hegemon. One key reason, says Gilpin, drawing on the work of Kindleberger, Robert Keohane, and John Ruggie, is that the hegemonic power must itself be committed to a relatively liberal international order, with fairly open markets and restrained military force, and must resist the temptation to take advantage of its dominant status. (If the very temple of laissez faire turns protectionist, why keep worshipping there?) Indeed, the hegemon must bend over backwards to indulge its wards, who thrive in the shadow of the peacekeeper and can preoccupy themselves with commercial prowess while the hegemon strangles in its military machine.

If the dominant power fails to restrain itself, "hegemony"—a fairly benign brand of dominance in Kindleberger's conception—mutates into simple tyranny, of the sort that the Nazis or the Soviets exercised over their satellites. But in order to sustain the more liberal sort of hegemony, the hegemonic power has to make it worth the while of other states, serving as the market of last resort, the banker of last resort, as well as the military guarantor of peaceful commerce. In Kindleberger's classic formulation, it was the failure of any state to perform these vital functions during the interwar period that led to financial collapse and the Great Depression. However, warns Gilpin, "If other states begin to regard the actions of the hegemon as self-serving and contrary to their own political and economic interests, the hegemonic system will be greatly weakened."

This perfectly describes the current predicament of the United States and, by extension, of the global political economy. During the remarkable thirty-year period of a U.S.-sponsored protectorate, state and market coexisted in a delicate equipoise in which capitalist economic growth was nicely balanced by Keynesian and social democratic stabilizers in most of the industrial north. But today, the United States no longer is strong enough to play the role of benign hegemon, and the globalization of finance and commerce is eroding the balance between market and state. This dilemma was compounded during the Reagan presidency by self-defeating economic policies and a reversion to militarism under Reagan in a vain effort to recapture America's past preeminence via enhanced chauvinism and spending on weaponry. But these efforts are hopelessly at odds with the centripetal, pluralist forces in the world. Gilpin writes: "In the closing decades of the twentieth century the United States has found itself caught between its many commitments and its decreased power, the classic position of a declining hegemon." Not only is the American economic position weakened both relatively and absolutely; the U.S.-sponsored institutions of the postwar economic system—GATT, IMF, World Bank, and so on—have also been relatively weakened. And as the cold war thaws, the geopolitical rationale for other nations to accept the discipline of an American military is also weakened.

"For a time," writes Gilpin, "the United States was able to mask its decline and defer difficult choices by exploiting its hegemonic economic position." But with the weakening dollar and the escalating foreign debt, those days are ending. America's abrupt deterioration, according to Gilpin, forces difficult choices among the uses of its national wealth: consumption, investment, and defense. Yet the domestic politics of the past decade has been precisely an exercise in avoiding these choices. And the geopolitics has been a nostalgic attempt to perpetuate relationships that are no longer financially viable, in which the crippled dollar continues to dominate global finance, the United States still carries the banner of free trade while indulging the hegemon's tolerance

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of mercantilism in its allies, and the collapse of the Third World is seen as a minor issue. For Gilpin, the effective choice for the world economy is a collapse or an improbable new hegemon or a difficult new system of stable pluralism.

Richard Rosecrance's *The Rise of the Trading State* is a good companion to Gilpin. Like Kennedy, Rosecrance has one simple point to make: Geopolitical dominance is not the only possible strategy for a nation state. The alternative is commercial prowess. Early in the modern age, Renaissance Venice, the Hanseatic League, and the Dutch empire, among other small polities, achieved great influence not via territorial might or military conquest but by emphasizing trade. Lately, Germany, Japan, and the new industrial powers of the Pacific basin have accomplished much the same thing. During the heyday of the territorial nation state, which Rosecrance calls the "Westphalian System" (after the 1648 Treaty of Westphalia), territorial ambition pretty much carried the day. Nineteenth-century Britain was the one exception in that it refrained from territorial expansion in Europe and used the strength of its arms mainly to defend its commercial access.

But lately, in part because nuclear weapons make world war unthinkable, trading states have become a real alternative once again. Rosecrance thinks he discerns an epochal shift in the dynamics of international relations, comparable to the shift from the one-dimensional authority of the Holy Roman Empire to the bifurcated world of global markets and nation states. In their global objectives, most states now pursue commercial rather than territorial advantage. Domestically, the state finds itself "mediative" rather than sovereign—unable to control its own economy because of the largely uncontrolled global flows of capital. But—and here is the rub—"Despite the inability to control its fate, the modern state remains the primary unit of international politics."

Here, Rosecrance lets his heart run away with his head. Like Kennedy, Rosecrance is at heart a nineteenth-century liberal, with immense enthusiasm for the multiple virtues of trade. His head, however, discerns a real problem: The "mediative" state so characteristic of a laissez-faire system of trading nations lacks the power to solve the problems of its citizens. The current international system may enjoy an eerie calm geopolitically (at least compared to the recent past), but it remains an anarchic mess economically, and this must spill over into politics. We had barely a generation of social democratic-Keynesian social peace before laissez-faire returned through the back door of international economics.

Like Gilpin, Rosecrance looks hopefully to a more pluralist world in which trade will sweeten bellicose impulses. He sees world political economy as two ideal types—the Westphalian system of territoriality, sovereignty, military conquest, and "spurious independence," versus the liberal norms of trading states like Venice and modern Japan. In world history according to Rosecrance the modern age began when the state became supreme. At first, commerce and nationalism fused, via mercantilism. In the nineteenth century market and state separated, yet the state grew ever more gargantuan. Now, however, we are entering a new age, in the very shadow of great power stalemate, in which commerce can at last be preeminent, and the state will, uh, wither away. What makes the state at last vestigial is not communism, but capitalism (!). And weapons of mass destruction are so unusable that they become "ceremonial" and atavistic. Rosecrance foresees that in coming years, the military-political model of territorial advantage will give way to a positive-sum system of benign trading states. He even hopes large states like the United States will decide to put their money on trade rather than militarism.

This prospect, though certainly attractive, begs a few key questions. How will rules be imposed on the essential anarchy of the international system? Can we sufficiently trust aggressive states to the point where all nations can lay down their arms? How will states reclaim the economic sovereignty necessary to broker domestic social peace? What about the latent mercantilism of many trading states that do well enough as free riders on the liberal norms of the system but who would be in

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trouble if big states became mercantilists, too? Despite Rosecrance's celebration of trading states with Ricardian norms, neither Renaissance Venice, which carved out monopolistic concessions, nor modern mercantilist Japan is an entirely convincing example of a "liberal" power.

The ultimate problem with Rosecrance's rosy scenario for a pluralist capitalist world of "trading states" is this: The essence of capitalism is that relations are ad hoc, transient, and purely instrumental. As an organizing entity, the state commands far more durable, extrarational loyalties than any institution of the market system. We pledge allegiance to the flag of the United States of America; but we pledge allegiance to the House of Morgan only until Citibank makes us a better offer (nor does it pledge reliable allegiance to us). We still rely on the state for ultimate security—but the polity is ever less able to provide it as laissez-faire triumphs. Unfortunately, too, the backlash against the insecurity of a purely instrumental, capitalist world is not producing a new generation of social democratic stabilizers suitable for a global political economy in the tradition of humanistic liberalism. Rather, the insecurity is engendering an upsurge of primal religious and nationalistic fanatacisms. And in the United States and Thatcher's Britain, the process comes grotesquely full circle, in which the insecurity somehow generates chauvinist fervor—on behalf of ever purer capitalism!

A good guide to the military, as opposed to the economic, dimension of the coming of geopolitical pluralism is David Calleo. Where Robert Keohane's 1984 book, *After Hegemony,* was mainly about economic dominance, Calleo's similarly titled *Beyond American Hegemony* is concretely about the politics of the Atlantic military alliance. But Calleo's analysis of NATO serves as a broader metaphor. Calleo, who has also written widely about international economics, thinks it is time not just for "burden sharing" but for genuine power sharing among the Western nations. His case is all the more persuasive now, because the book was written before Gorbachev's recent peace overtures made détente even more plausible.

Recalling the origins of the NATO alliance, Calleo observes that George Kennan, the architect of "containment," wanted to create a shield behind which a pluralist reconstruction of a self-reliant Europe could proceed. But as things turned out, "Containment became the basis not for a plural world but for American empire." Now that the promise of containment has at last been fulfilled—a more restrained Soviet Union and an economically vital Europe—governments on both sides of the Atlantic are uneasy about revising the inherited, increasingly outmoded assumptions of NATO. In principle, NATO always permitted a mutual, multilateral sort of alliance, but in practice "Postwar American leadership . . . developed a characteristic style that clothed the realities of hegemony in the trappings of pluralism."

Much of Calleo's book discusses oscillations between America's postwar overextension and its episodic desire to return to its traditional isolationist impulses. (Even Star Wars can be seen as a yearning for Fortress America.) In this dialectic the Europeans alternately resent America's intrusive domination of their foreign policy—and resist periodic impulses toward East-West détente that would bring about a U.S. withdrawal. To many observers Europe seems schizophrenic on this question. Europeans have not been clear whether they view U.S. troops and missiles in their midst as a welcome trip-wire (deterring Soviet attack) or as an unwelcome magnet (inviting same). Conversely, the prospect of U.S. withdrawal seems simultaneously to offer Europe a more tranquil relationship with the USSR and a more uneasy one. Paradoxically, Europe, in the very path of imagined Soviet expansion, is generally more relaxed about the actual risks of a Soviet military incursion than the United States. To some extent, the European fear of U.S. withdrawal has far more to do with concerns about the resurrection of ancient geopolitical conflicts within Europe (such as German unification) that have been conveniently sidelined by the cold war and the U.S. military protectorate and far less to do with palpable fears of the Red Army.

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In this respect, Calleo's point is that twenty-five years after de Gaulle's independent foreign policy, eighteen years after Willy Brandt's Ostpolitik, and fifteen years after the collapse of Bretton Woods, it is time to recast the Atlantic alliance. "Financing the cost of [U.S.] hegemony was, in itself, threatening to make the international system unworkable. The means, in other words, were coming to devour the ends." Both the expenses of the cold war and the costs of keeping the dollar dominant have sapped America's economic strength. About one-third of America's total military outlays goes to pay the cost of keeping U.S. forces in Western Europe. Despite worsening fiscal pressures, the search for a cheap technological key to military supremacy has proven illusory. Ever since Nixon, the campaign for "burden sharing," according to Calleo, has been "a policy designed to shore up hegemony rather than share it." But, says Calleo, Western Europe has long since grown up to the point where it can and should take greater responsibility for its own national security, even if this means different perceptions of the Soviet menace, diminished U.S. influence in Europe, and the risk of what some conservatives fear as "Finlandization." Contrary to the apostles of the theory that hegemony is necessary to bring stability to an otherwise anarchic global political economy, Calleo, like Keohane, argues that pluralist regimes have functioned well during much of world history and could work in the twenty-first century. The immediate obstacle is American resistance.

For Calleo, America's military and monetary dominance have been masks to hide America's underlying competitive weakness. A "devolution" of military and financial authority to other nations is necessary, both to reflect the new economic realities and to permit the United States to give long overdue priority to its own economic health. This is a far bigger problem than merely the federal budget deficit, which gets disproportionate attention. A new, less dominant role for the United States within the Western alliance is the counterpart to a more pluralist world economic regime. "The American political system," he concludes, "finds it very difficult to face the reality of a plural world in which the U.S. is no longer supreme" either vis-à-vis its ostensible allies or vis-à-vis the Soviet Union. But events are forcing change. And "if there is a way out, it lies through Europe" as an independent emerging superpower: "History has come full circle: the Old World is needed to restore balance to the New."

None of these writers is in any sense a radical, but their voices, significantly, are outside the mainstream. For each in his own way has genuinely come to terms with the end of Pax Americana. Unfortunately, the mainstream policy debates in Washington and on Wall Street have hardly addressed this central question of how the United States might relinquish hegemony gracefully and at the same time build a more stable and equitable global economic order with shared responsibilities. Instead, the Reagan administration looked precisely in the opposite direction toward an America "standing tall" in military might and in a position to tutor other nations on the virtues of laissez-faire. Even the administration's mainstream critics, for the most part, focused on the conventional view that the only thing seriously wrong with the global economic system and America's role is the U.S. budget deficit and derivative imbalances.

C. Fred Bergsten's new book, *America in the World Economy,* is representative of this genre. Bergsten, a former Carter administration subcabinet official with responsibility for international economic relations, now heads an influential think tank, the Institute for International Economics. Bergsten's IIE, despite a distinctly Democratic party flavor, is the embodiment of the bipartisan, laissez-faire consensus. Bergsten has achieved some notoriety for insisting that the solution to America's trade imbalance is an ever cheaper dollar. Thus far, the cheap dollar has not solved the problem; it has only made America poorer. But "competitiveness" for Bergsten will flow mainly from getting America's macroeconomic house in order. Bergsten also advocates greater "convergence" of the major

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Western economies; he is thinking mainly of fiscal and monetary policy. He commends faster growth in Europe and Japan, budget balance and looser money in the United States. Free trade is to be defended against the onslaughts of protectionist fever. Exchange rates are to be subject to market forces but stabilized by the use of "target zones" and coordinated central bank purchases. Bergsten does allow himself to call for "an activist trade policy," but this turns out to mean aggressively championing freer trade and the GATT negotiations. He also supports modest debt relief for the Third World.

Another indicative illustration of establishment thinking is C. Michael Aho and Marc Levinson's *After Reagan: Confronting the Changed Global Economy*. This book, which grew out of a Council on Foreign Relations study group, concedes the diminished American standing in the world and the shift to global interdependence in which "the traditional instruments of economic policy are blunted." The remedy? Budget balance, policy coordination, moderate debt relief, management of exchange rates, and of course a fierce defense of free trade: "The fact that foreign governments offer producer subsidies is no reason for the U.S. government to do the same."

Two thoughts come to mind reading the work of policy operatives like Bergsten and Aho and Levinson. First, despite the now conventional plea that the reader acknowledge the reality of a changed world in which the United States is no longer dominant, the policy prescriptions subconsciously presume a continued American hegemony whose logic dictates that the United States continue to champion liberal trade and laissez-faire finance. For these analysts the absence of social and economic stabilizers in a global economy is not a problem. And concern for American competitiveness is seen as irrational protection of backward industries rather than as an alternative to a laissez-faire economy. Since any form of domestic economic planning would undermine the U.S.-inspired global liberal system, economic planning is verboten.

For a closely grained look at the limits of conventional economic diplomacy, consult Clyde Prestowitz's *Trading Places*, and Yoichi Funabashi's *Managing the Dollar*. Prestowitz was the Reagan administration's chief trade negotiator with the Japanese. A former business executive fluent in Japanese and genuinely knowledgeable about Japanese society, he soon became a leader of the hard-liners in the administration. Prestowitz's book is mostly a memoir of appalling diplomatic misadventures, which might be subtitled, "The Keystone Kops Meet MITI." But underneath the saga of diplomatic bungles is a relentless logic. The logic involves both the cold war and the GATT system. As the dominant power and sponsor of a liberal trading system, the United States is essentially powerless to take a seriously hard line against the Japanese. Looking at Japan through laissez-faire lenses and believing that protectionism can only harm the protectionist, we find it hard to grasp that the Japanese really are brilliant mercantilists who have devised a new synthesis of fiercely competitive capitalism at home and economic nationalism abroad. We also have difficulty comprehending Japan's domestic system of social comity, with its seemingly archaic family farms, mom-and-pop retailers, and antiquated service sector. In economic terms, these are understood as anomalous inefficiencies. Socially, however, they are essential underpinnings of Japan's efficient competitiveness.

Prestowitz tells story after poignant story of how America's reverence for laissez-faire undercut our ability to even identify, let alone advance, clear sectoral goals in our diplomacy with the Japanese. Our system is process-oriented; Japan's is result-oriented. But pressing Japan for specific results in the form of market shares in this or that product is viewed as a frontal assault on the very premise of the liberal trading system. Moreover, on the few occasions when U.S. negotiators did press for a specific goal, the Japanese were able to go over their heads to stress their loyalty as a cold-war ally. Generally, military concerns, which had higher priority on the American side, overwhelmed our economic concerns. Even where the United States specified diplomatic goals, such as "internationalization" of the yen, the Japanese responded in a way that served Tokyo

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rather than Washington or Wall Street. An internationalized yen turned out to mean that the Japanese bought American Treasury Bonds and corporate stocks (neatly increasing U.S. financial dependence), not that foreign brokers got to play as equals in the Tokyo capital markets. "As the United States declines," Prestowitz concludes, "it is increasingly faced with the choice between maintaining its non-interventionist free trade policies and of ensuring the health of important industries." And Japan, which has reaped such gain from the world trading system, needs to take greater responsibility for balance in the system.

That, of course, requires the United States not just to bargain harder for access to markets and perhaps to commit heresies like economic planning. It also means that the United States must be willing to genuinely share dominion. Despite all sorts of establishment noises about "interdependence" and "coordination," it is not at all clear that plural leadership is what Washington wants.

Yoichi Funabashi's *Managing the Dollar* is a superb chronicle of the diplomacy of muddling through. Funabashi, one of Japan's most distinguished economic journalists, managed to interview all the major players in the now famous Plaza Accord of September 1985, which ended the experiment in floating exchange rates. The Reagan administration's policy shift, orchestrated by then Treasury Secretary James Baker and his deputy Richard Darman, was an epic case of reversing course without revising stated ideology. Though markets are still held to reign supreme, somehow markets were getting the value of the dollar wrong and had to be manipulated, notwithstanding the ideological embarrassment.

Funabashi's story is one of minimalist statecraft. Though the essential world monetary system is unchanged, the world's major capitalist powers agreed first to drive down the value of the dollar, and then to jointly administer a system of currency zones. But, as Funabashi shows, the process of exchange-rate coordination has been far less smooth than its public image. Though the major nations were able to agree during 1986 and 1987 on coordinated cuts in interest rates—a major stimulus to world economic expansion—the United States annoyed first Tokyo by refusing to support the dollar at the symbolically important 150-yen level and then annoyed Bonn by playing a game of chicken with rising interest rates intended to pressure the Germans into stimulating their economy. The resulting outflow of European and Japanese capital from the United States, though temporary, set off just enough alarm bells to help trigger the October 1987 stock crash.

In effect, despite the self-congratulation about the new system of managed exchange rates, the Plaza system falls far short of being the kind of stable monetary regime that Bretton Woods provided under American auspices for nearly thirty years. Nor have the Group of Three, or Five, or Seven even begun to tackle more serious issues such as the Third World debt. Here again, though the Europeans and the Japanese are in principle willing to commit additional capital, the United States remains reluctant to give up the reins. To permit a refinancing of Third World debt would not only be expensive for American banks; given the dominance of Japanese and European capital in any such refinancing, it would also be expensive for American influence.

Thus the dilemma: The United States is no longer able to provide the world economic system with stabilizing ballast, or to enforce a set of coherent rules. There is growing acceptance of the idea that the United States cannot afford to play its old role and that it should not attempt to. But the combination of pluralism and laissez-faire could prove hazardous indeed. With the sovereignty of the nation-state weakening, all of the anarchic tendencies that used to infect national capitalisms—chronic overcapacity, competitive deflation, a race to cut wages, instability originating in the financial sector—are reborn at the level of the global economy. And no transnational governing mechanisms have yet been invented to fashion a global fiscal and monetary policy and global full employment, let alone global income redistribution. As Walter Russell Mead

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observes in *Mortal Splendor,* workers in the Third World are typically paid something like half, relative to their productivity, the pay rate of workers in the Western world. In such circumstances "interdependence" becomes a mechanism to lower wages and living standards, and the putative efficiency gains of liberal trade are undone by the losses of falling wages. The Keynesian-social democratic compromise was a delicate enough trick at the level of the nation-state. It seems all but impossible in a laissez-faire global economy.

Mead's book, in many respects, is the most provocative of the lot. He spends his first two hundred pages putting his own original interpretation on the sunset of American empire. Here, the take is somewhat quirky, but interesting. What makes Mead indispensable, however, is not what he adds to other writers' musings about the hubris of Vietnam, Nixon as the last liberal, and so on, but his original analysis of the crisis of global Keynesianism, in which global purchasing power is not distributed in a manner that allows the economy to consume all it produces, and essentially Marxian dilemmas overwhelm what remain of Keynesian stabilizers.

For the moment the world economy seems perched precariously on the blade of an unstable equilibrium, in which just enough remains of the shell of the Bretton Woods machinery and just enough ad hoc coordination and muddle-through economic diplomacy endures to keep the dollar from crashing and to keep the Third World out of explicit bankruptcy. In the short run, Germany and Japan find it in their self-interest to keep the U.S. economy on life supports.

But obviously the United States cannot continue running budget and trade deficits to breathe life into global demand, ultimately collateralized by American industrial assets that are being sold off at an increasing rate. At some point, barring a sudden inspiration of new, robust statecraft, the system is at risk of degenerating into either depression or overt political conflict among the major capitalist nations no longer united by a common Soviet threat.

Keynes, in reconstructing the global capitalist system, understood the system's deflationary biases and attempted to build institutions such as the IMF that would have an expansionary bias instead. He wanted a world system that would allow nation states to pursue full-employment welfare states at home. But the IMF mutated into an austerity agent. The promise of trade unionism and full employment foundered on a laissez-faire encounter with a global army of the unemployed.

If one is an optimist, the demise of the Bretton Woods system, the "imperial overstretch" of the United States, the prospect of a genuine end to the cold war, the coming of age of at least some Third World nations, all promise a new pluralism—what John Kennedy called a world "safe for diversity." However, the United States remains reluctant to let go—at great cost to itself and to the world system. To the extent that American leaders imagine a successor system, it is a relentlessly laissez-faire one, where the only replacement for American power is the giddy anarchy of market power, which is no viable system at all. As the first modern theorist to appropriate the Greek word *hegemonia,* the Italian Marxist Antonio Gramsci, put it, "The crisis consists precisely in the fact that the old is dying and the new cannot be born." □

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Janos Kis

TURNING POINT IN HUNGARY

A Voice from the Democratic Opposition

The present crisis in Hungary was preceded by an unusually long period of tranquility. We should first examine the roots of this exceptional political stability lasting over a quarter of a century.

We have to start by stating a historical fact. In 1956–1957 Hungarian society suffered a total defeat: It was unable to salvage any of its independent organizations formed in October–November and was left without recognized leaders and spokesmen. When five years later those in power embarked upon the path of gradual consolidation they did so not under societal pressure, but rather for the sake of convenience. The defeated society had no political groups capable of criticizing the consolidation determined from above and countering it with a proposal of reconciliation from below.

This initial trauma in itself, however, cannot serve as an explanation for the whole story. The regime had to be able to offer something to the populace. I think that what the consolidation era yielded can be summarized in two slogans. The first was "the fundamental achievements of socialism." This included guarantees of existential security: Full employment, stable prices, pensions with enduring purchasing power, prime consumer necessities cheaper than their costs, free education and health care, and rents and utilities affordable to everyone. The other slogan was "socialist national unity," which was expressed in a twist of the biblical phrase, "He who is not against us is with us." It is more difficult to define this category through a list. Its essence was that the party leadership consciously tried to keep social conflicts at a low level. Direct mobilization campaigns of the populace were discontinued and people were allowed to use their free time to tend to private life. The leadership was trying to make it possible for working people to increase their disposable income through extra efforts and to ensure that they could spend it as well. A process by which ideology would be excised step by step from culture and science was tolerated. And finally the people were allowed cautiously to feel out the holes and cracks in the wall of official regulations, so that by having found them they could improve their lot, or at least compensate for their losses.

The policy of consolidation did not supplant overnight the policy of restoration of the regime. It was a long process of learning and accommodation, with ups and downs and blunders. But on the whole it gave rise to an unprecedented organic evolution especially in three areas: in the development of the consumer market the 1968 reforms played a decisive role (although they left the labor and capital markets unaffected, they did liberate the consumer-goods market to a large extent); in the strengthening of the second economy* (the 1968 reform gave a strong impetus to this area as well); and in the restoration of the internal norms of science and culture. All this was accompanied by a series of piecemeal conces-

This article was written in December 1987 in response to a questionnaire sent out to twenty-six intellectuals by *Századvég*, a Budapest student review. The questions concerned (1) the crisis in Hungary, (2) the evaluation of the reform programs originating from independent sources, and (3) the authors' own reform proposals.

* The informal, semilegal economy, largely tolerated but not institutionally recognized.

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sions (e.g., the gradual expansion of travel opportunities), which brought tangible improvement to the people's life without any substantial cost to the regime.

Solid existential security, gradual improvement of living conditions, and steady economic growth did indeed represent real achievements; thus, it is not surprising that the population—remembering the defeat of 1956—did not want to risk these achievements in exchange for political struggles of uncertain outcome. The overwhelming majority of people lived under the illusion of healthy progress even when it was already possible to see that the entire system rested on a minefield. Let us recall the mood of the masses at the beginning of the eighties when in some Eastern European countries the economic catastrophe had already occurred: "We Hungarians are better, harder-working, more adroit; we are able to manage our affairs better, and our leaders are competent in running the country as well. . . ."

And we should not shy away from recalling the more sophisticated intellectual version of these platitudes: "In Eastern Europe two alternatives for creating civil society have been tested: the Polish and the Hungarian. The Polish path leads through political organization, and its objective is to limit and control the power of the regime. The Hungarian path represents the economic formation of civil society, even though its main track is the expansion of the second economy. This transforms the state economy as well, yet does so without political conflicts, virtually unnoticeably. As in 1956 and 1968, the Polish path by definition had to lead to catastrophe, while the evolution of Hungarian civil society moves ahead in an organic way. . . ."

These sentiments were still prevalent in the early eighties, although by then the forced slowdown of economic growth was well under way. Foreign trade statistics provided crystal clear evidence that Hungary, along with the entire COMECON, was slipping from the middle rung of the world economy to the level of the Third World's stagnating regions. Nonetheless, as long as it could, the regime continued the policy of avoiding conflicts even during the time of austerity. The hardships were distributed in such a way that they visibly aggravated the condition only of those marginal groups unable to express their discontent.

Poverty became once again a widespread concern, but only for the traditionally poor strata, while those segments of the population crucial to political stability were left unaffected. For them only the maintenance of their earlier standard of living became more difficult: They gradually had to become accustomed to accelerating inflation, to the dismantling of state price subsidies, and to working ever harder to sustain their habitual level of consumption. The state, however, also expanded the sphere of additional work and income opportunities: Centrally positioned strata received a chance to start private enterprises and to take part in the new, profitable form of overtime within the state sector, the so-called "economic workshop." Consequently, among those groups that determine the general public mood—the elite of the working class and the mid-level white-collar workers—no psychological turnaround took place. Only some latent malaise started to spread as years went by, the slump did not let up, and the promised upswing failed to materialize.

The expiration of the consolidation era was first evidenced by the leaders', rather than the populace's, conduct. In 1985 the party leadership, ignoring the economists' warnings, announced a new program of stimulating the economy: It promised more capital investment to industry and growing real wages to employees. The immediate consequence of this attempt was the alienation of the professional intelligentsia, which concluded that the country's leaders had lost touch with reality and were helplessly drifting toward economic catastrophe. Its delayed consequences came into view at the end of 1986 when it became obvious even to the leadership that the attempt to accelerate growth had failed and had led to such imbalances in the economy as to demand immediate intervention. The party leadership and its apparatuses suddenly lost their decisiveness and realized that they were not in control of the situation. At that point they were forced to demand unequivocal, severe sacrifices even from those middle strata, which until then had

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been more or less spared—although it was not clear whether the collapse of the economy could be avoided even at the cost of such measures. The leadership could no longer conceal its confusion from the public. Those strata that had ensured the political stability of the regime were overcome by disappointment, frustration, and anger. And those prestigious independent intellectuals, who had earlier played such an important role in shaping public opinion favorable to the political leadership, were not at hand either. Thus, even before the worst consequences of the economic crisis have become full-blown, we are in the very midst of a political crisis.

A Crisis of Consolidation

This crisis is the crisis of the regime's consolidation course. It is the end result of the practice that kept Hungarian society in a state of tranquility. The Soviet-style model of existential security and minimizing conflicts had to be realized within an economic system essentially unchanged since 1948. In this system the macroeconomic processes have been regulated through administrative, hierarchical commands and not by market regulators. More precisely, the economy, in spite of the various reform attempts, could not break free of its hierarchical structure because the regime's stability was linked to Soviet-style formulas of existential security and the avoidance of open conflicts. This dual bind, however, imposed limitations on the regime's consolidation course. Political stability could be preserved only as long as the GNP's growth was fast enough simultaneously to finance the insatiable capital-investment needs of industry, the prestige-expenditures of the apparatuses, the subsidies of consumer prices, the full employment of the population (which was engaged in nonproductive work), and the continuous increase of income for those groups capable of expressing their discontent. Economies of predominantly hierarchical mechanisms, however, are capable of producing an acceptable rate of growth only as long as they have at their disposal an unlimited supply of very cheap resources. When both labor and raw materials become scarce and expensive, such economies start to stagnate. This potential danger began to be a real menace for Hungary in the early seventies when the mobilization of rural labor reserves became virtually exhausted, and the heretofore ever expanding rate of Soviet raw material and energy deliveries slowed down. The leadership did not respond to this challenge with a fundamental transformation of the economy (at precisely this time it turned against even the fragmentary reform of 1968); instead, it chose the fatal policy of postponement. It took advantage of abundant Western credit offers and financed an unchanged rate of growth with loans. This growing indebtedness made it possible to preserve political stability for another decade without giving up the course of consolidation. But at the same time this step led to the country's having to face not only economic stagnation but also a sudden decline, the collapse of the consumer market, grave shortages, and galloping inflation.

Once economic collapse takes place, it is going to be very difficult to climb out of it. And not only because "the low-level disequilibrium trap" has a permanent pull-back effect. It is not going to be easy to find a policy of recovery either. The leadership's resistance to reform ideas did decrease in the eighties. In its indecision it sooner or later tries to put to work almost any available idea, but without a coordinated, comprehensive reform strategy. Consequently, on the surface everything is accomplished; in reality, no substantial change takes place. Our bankrupt economy will bear a striking resemblance to market economies: We will have commercial banks, corporations, insurance companies, a stock-and-securities exchange, and private enterprise. The only thing we will not have will be a functioning market. Our political life will be brimming over with corporativism; so many federations will represent so many interests that our heads will spin trying to keep track of them; there will be independent movements and associations, real parliamentary debates, and probably even parliamentary caucuses. The only thing we will not have will be functioning political pluralism.

But the country's internal confusion will be

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overshadowed by its loss of external orientation. There will be no new hopes of strengthening our ties with the Soviet Union and other COMECON countries; it is obvious that we cannot expect cures for our ills from that direction. But public opinion may easily lose its trust in the other direction as well. We should remember that no matter what the cause of the present economic crisis, its symptoms are manifested by monetary dependence on Western creditors. In the population's perception the West may come to mean creditors' coercion: The package programs of the International Monetary Fund (IMF) to limit consumption, Neckerman department stores for those who have foreign currency accounts, and empty grocery stores for those who do not; an astonishing increase in the traffic of smuggled goods, a currency black market with astronomical exchange rates, prosperity for the privileged few and destitution for the underprivileged many. In short, the West may come to look like what the United States means to the masses of less fortunate Latin American countries. Let us imagine how this perception will affect the spirit of a society that never had the opportunity to digest fully the ethos of the market, of democracy, and liberalism.

Evaluating Reform Proposals

Does it make any sense at all to ponder reforms in the face of such prospects? There is definitely no cause for excessive optimism. We should notice, however, that the crisis is pregnant not with dangers alone but also with new opportunities. The stability of the consolidation era forestalled fundamental changes. The end of stability opens the way for change.

On the one hand, the leadership and its apparatuses have never been so indecisive as to which elements of the regime are to be treated as untouchable and permanent and which can be open to transformation. On the other hand—I consider this the more important factor—the conservatism of those strata that served as pillars of consolidation has become shaken.

Nowadays official orators frequently complain that the populace is more dissatisfied than is justified by the actual worsening of its condition. Indeed, the material conditions of those strata capable of registering their dissatisfaction did not worsen as drastically as their grumbling intensified. But is this not a sign that much more is at stake than the correlation of prices and wages? I believe it to be a well-founded assumption that this grumbling and anger is of a moral nature and derives from the fact that the state relinquished its obligations as patron in exchange for which its subjects had felt justified in accepting the role of clients. It is the very model of the state's and its subjects' coexistence that has now been put into question. What the people lost was not a few banknotes but a way of life made possible by the existential conditions expressed in the slogans, "the fundamental achievements of socialism" and "socialist national unity." It is certain that in the general disappointment and anger there is a lot of retrospective passion, a desire to restore the merry old times of consolidation. But since the past—no matter how it was—cannot be revived, it is possible that the pivotal political strata might become receptive to another model of social coexistence. As for myself, I think that the primary task of comprehensive reform programs is to point out that an alternative model—for which it is worthwhile to accept inevitable sacrifices—is possible.

First, it must be made clear that the type of economic system—a regulated, mixed-market economy—that may arrest the process by which the country is sliding to the level of the Third World's stagnating regions, cannot be reconciled with the sociopolitical guarantees of the consolidation era. It is simply not possible simultaneously to meet the challenges of the world economy and to provide the population with administrative guarantees of a life without losses and conflicts. A market economy—if it really functions—cannot be automatically safeguarded, among other things, from inflation or unemployment, and it does inevitably intensify social conflicts. Therefore, a market economy has to be combined with social protection networks and political structures different from the ones to which we became accustomed. The welfare problems of well-integrated strata have to be managed primarily through various market, insurance, and other arrangements, while state redistribution methods should be

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retained for the poor and the unemployed. In the political sphere institutions are needed such as can regulate and resolve conflicts: trade unions, a functioning parliament, legally defined freedom of the press, and effectively safeguarded civil rights. It must be demonstrated that such an econo-socio-political system would not be in conflict with the people's sense of justice: It would not leave the indigents to their fate; it could keep within acceptable limits inequality of income and wealth; it would be able to deal with the problem of unemployment; and along with better economic performance, it would bring about a host of other advantages as well. It would take us closer to the ideal of citizens' equality; it would provide individuals and minorities with greater autonomy and legal protection vis-à-vis the state; it would widen the spectrum of available life alternatives.

This is not a blueprint for a new, superior social formation, superseding all others in world history. The task is not to outline the future for the world; it is to prevent the fatal deterioration of our country. If in the process we get closer to the solution of a historical dilemma, I would define this as bringing our country closer to the path of European evolution. The institutions and cultural examples to be emulated are well-known, as are their advantages and disadvantages. We simply have to face them soberly.

And with the same sobriety we must assess those conditions that constrain our first steps. We have to consider a variety of givens: traditions (aversion to certain liberal values), economic conditions (the state sector's domination cannot be eliminated overnight), geopolitical factors (the post-Yalta status quo cannot be transformed at one stroke). Comprehensive reform programs have to demonstrate that a compromise is possible between the requirements of catching up with the world and the factors that constrain our choices.

In my view these concerns adequately summarize the dominant intentions of the various reform programs. It is not certain that all reformers agree, but I believe this summary rather accurately reflects the intentions of the program "Renewal and Reform" and is in harmony with the basic ideas of the *Beszélő** manifesto *Social Contract*. I consider it noteworthy that even explicitly Communist reformers—the most significant is Mihály Bihari, the author of *Reform and Democracy*—focus their attention on the compromise between political pluralization and initial limitations.

It is, of course, another question altogether what would be the place of the various reformers within the political spectrum of a pluralist democracy (*Beszélő* would be somewhat left of center.) There are also differences as to what must be considered untouchable limitations in the short run and which will have an enduring effect. There is also a lack of agreement concerning the ordering of priorities. These differences of opinion are inevitable and natural. But it is equally important that these positions do gravitate toward each other with regard to the fundamental issues.

Can One Be a Reformer?

Rather than present additional reform proposals I want to say something about the political problem of being a reformer. At the beginning—in 1965–1968 but even in the first half of the eighties—"reformer" meant a specialist who was included in the official decision-making process. Such a reformer worked in closed committees and his memoranda to the decision makers were "confidential." Around the mid-eighties a radical group seceded from the official reformers and wanted to address not only the leadership but the population at large. Since the acceleration of the crisis, a third form of reformism has been taking shape; its representatives would like to see the democratic renewal of the party at the center of reform and address primarily those Communists who could be mobilized for this cause. Finally, there are those oppositional circles, like *Beszélő*, which want to address the segment of the population that places its hope neither in the reform of the apparatuses nor in the party, but which could serve as a foundation for independent movements and organizations.

* *Beszélő*, on whose editorial board the author serves, is a journal associated with the Democratic Opposition.

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This differentiation is a positive one and may be the harbinger of a pluralistic political process involving separate forces. Since within the constraints of our situation the resolution of the country's crisis is conceivable only in the form of compromise, I believe that everyone should be happy to see that the reform camp is differentiated, with the exception of those who hope for a catastrophe (not that I know anyone who does).

Nevertheless, we have to notice that the political forces of reform are not yet on the scene. The leadership does not have a reform wing (at best it has a few individual reform politicians); the possibility of some real movement within the party appears to be remote as well. The apparatuses' resistance to reform has probably weakened, but it has not turned to active reformism. And we may entertain only a very cautious hope that the massive social discontent will move from grumbling into collective action. In reality, every reformer for the most part addresses the same intellectual audience, which lacks organization as well, but at least is engaged in an intense debate about the alternatives facing the country. It is possible that the surprising intellectual unity of the reformers is partially a consequence of this paradox: If the various programs were to be promoted by actual political forces—especially heterogeneous forces—the differences among these programs would in all likelihood become greater. But right now I do not want to meditate about the modes of possible differentiation; they do not lend themselves to prophesy anyway. I would like to call attention to a latent danger of the present, prepolitical situation.

The weakened leadership is in need of some sort of authority external to it. It apparently cannot count on the public support of prominent intellectuals. In such a situation those in power can hope to strengthen their position only if they can claim at least that they entered into a dialogue with the dissenters. Such a dialogue legitimizes the leader, endows him with recognition without entailing any binding obligations. "He listened to every opinion, he did everything that could have been done in the given situation. . . ."

I would not ask anybody to turn his back on dialogue. But I am also aware that mere conversation can become negotiation only when the two sides are backed by political forces. Nevertheless, some immediate steps could be taken to ensure that the dialogue not become mere rhetoric that discredits and demoralizes those who enter into it. In my opinion, the most important thing is to insist that the dialogue receive publicity. No one in this country has anything to say to those in power that is not of equal concern to the entire population. We need free access to the media as a right and not as a one-time privilege; but as a right, it has to belong to every Hungarian citizen, not only to those "dissenters" who are part of the dialogue. We need the right to public statement of collective views, which, along with the right to expression, also includes the right to assembly and association. These rights can be won. The arbitrary administrative control of the press, of assembly, and of association is under increasing pressure. If a breakthrough could be achieved on this point, it would significantly decrease the danger that reformers will drift into a dubious role on the pretext of dialogue; the entire society would gain something that would probably enable it to organize itself into political forces.

P.S.: Since the above text was written and published, the political landscape of Hungary has been changed in important ways. At the May 1988 extraordinary party conference, Kádár lost his office of general secretary, which he had held for almost thirty-two years. Together with him the whole Old Guard of the party leadership left the political scene. Their fall opened a new phase in the disintegration of the party-state. Encouraged by the resulting chaos and disarray, political organizations, including once disbanded but now recreated parties, appeared in the arena. The press is virtually out of control, top officials promise legalization of *samizdat* reviews. Independent trade unions are emerging. Although still largely enclosed within the white-collar community, the movement of self-organization clearly overstepped the confines of the intelligentsia. A new constitution is being written; its authors promise to codify fundamental human rights and democratic processes.

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There is reason for hope, but also for fear, in this situation. What we have now in Hungary is not an ordered transition towards democracy. The constitution-making process notwithstanding, the incipient pluralism is not born out of a social contract; it is the child of the breakdown of authority. There are no rules regulating the activity of the emerging organizations; they simply try to break into the political arena. Unable to resist, the Communist party seems to be also unable to yield at the right moment. This logic may push it into concessions it probably won't be able to respect. Thus, the present fertile chaos could end in a catastrophe and a political deadlock.

Another reason for anxiety is the continuous deterioration of the economy. For the second year, Hungary has two-digit inflation, and there does not seem to be any effective policy at hand to curb it. The budget deficit is at the threshold of the intolerable, per capita hard currency debts are the highest in Europe (including Yugoslavia and Poland) and keep growing. Although a set of wide-ranging reforms has been legislated, including a bill on companies permitting every conceivable form of private and mixed property, even joint ventures with an overwhelming share of foreign capital, the nongovernmental sector remains a negligible quantity. As always, it is easier to introduce reforms on paper than to push them through against the resistance and inertia of the party and state apparatuses. But this may mean an economic catastrophe which would, in its turn, virtually exclude any chance for a social contract regulating the necessary transition process.

The alternative Hungary is facing now is to create a constitutional, multiparty democracy and a mixed, market economy, or to regress into economic decay and political Balkanization. The chance for the former to happen seems to be slim. Still, this is our only chance for the next generations. We cannot choose another terrain, more favorable to the realization of the values of liberty, equality and fraternity. We have to try to use this tiny bit of chance, here and now.

Translated by GABOR FOLLIMUS □

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Sean Wilentz

THE NEW HISTORY & ITS CRITICS

A Look at Gertrude Himmelfarb's Complaint

Gertrude Himmelfarb's engaging, censorious collection of essays brings to mind how little the neoconservatives have affected American historical writing.* Surely no one could have predicted this failure, given both the resources at the neocons' command and history's notorious exposure to shifting political winds. Recent conservatizing trends have certainly touched historical scholarship in other Western democracies. Yet in the United States, it has fallen to economists, philosophers, and political scientists to fashion an academically plausible neoconservativism. Among popular and academic historians alike, liberals, radicals, and old-line conservatives—not the reborn neocons—have produced the most influential and widely read work of the last fifteen years. After eight years of Reagan, the most conspicuous neoconservative historical genre remains the tub-thumping diatribes in *Commentary*, the *New Criterion*, and the *American Scholar*.[1]

Himmelfarb's writings are a cut above these. An important intellectual historian of Victorian Britain, Himmelfarb has at least contributed, in *The Idea of Poverty* (1984), an ambitious, if tendentious piece of scholarship about the English Industrial Revolution. And these essays—a series of assaults on the so-called "new history"—stand as monuments of reasoned criticism compared with the sputtering of professors like Norman Cantor.[2] Considering that Himmelfarb intended these essays as provocations, they are carefully considered, sometimes insightful. And they help us see why the neocons have had so much trouble impressing practicing historians.

Triumph of the New?

Himmelfarb's basic complaint is that the new history—analytical in form, social or psychological in focus—has displaced traditional or conventional history, with its narrative method and political focus. "In the historical profession as a whole," she writes, "the new history is the new orthodoxy"; the old history—"once at the center of the profession"—is now peripheral. This is a tactical overstatement: A check of the personnel in the major history departments nationwide or of recent recipients of honors like the Pulitzer Prize shows that rumors of traditional history's overthrow are greatly exaggerated. No one, however, can deny the enormous boom in the prestige of historical subdisciplines that were either marginal or nonexistent thirty years ago. And, without question, some new historians, flushed by the enthusiasm typical of any rising intellectual trend, have sounded obnoxiously intolerant.

But Himmelfarb's case doesn't rest with what she calls "the triumph of the new." She declares that the new history is at war, not just with the old history but with "history itself" and with "reason itself." She points an accusing finger at three groups of miscreants—the psychohistorians, the new social historians, and the radical historians.[3] She charges that all three are determinist, so much so that they efface the importance of historical events and the dignity of individuals. All three demean

* *The New History and the Old: Critical Essays and Reappraisals*, Cambridge Mass., and London: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1987, 209 pp. $20.00.

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politics, thereby robbing history of its unifying theme. All three slight ideas, by treating them as by-products of some deeper struggle—Oedipal, demographic, or economic. To rescue history from further desecration, she looks forward to a return to those time-tested methods and subjects—"dynasties and governments, wars and laws, treaties and documents"—which she claims the new historians dismiss out of hand.

Himmelfarb spends the least energy on psychohistory—appropriately enough, given that many of those she calls new historians consider the field a disaster area. For years, psychohistory has operated largely as an academic sideshow—debunking lofty reputations in a manner that actually precludes moral, political, or historical judgments. Himmelfarb makes easy work of pointing this out in some brief remarks about Erik Erikson's *Young Man Luther* and discussions of two psychobiographies of the 1970s.

If anything, she is *too* quick and easy. We might expect Himmelfarb to assail better books than she does. Among others, Peter Gay's and Carl Schorske's rather different studies of Freud and Austro-German cultural politics mobilize psychoanalytic concepts far more persuasively than the run-of-the-mill psychobiographies do—and without threatening reason or history. The works Himmelfarb singles out may be more typical of psychohistorical practice, but an intellectual current ought to be judged by its best work, not by its uneven pioneering efforts or its mediocrities. Himmelfarb's aim is true, but her performance here looks too much like a dazzling display of Coney Island marksmanship.

Her writing improves when it comes to the mélange of history and the social sciences that, in this country, passes for the mainstream of the new social history. Here Himmelfarb takes on the widely respected scholarship of historians like Peter Laslett and Lawrence Stone; and here she delivers her most telling points. As Himmelfarb observes, the problem with so much of the new social history is not that it often concentrates on the powerless masses instead of the powerful few, or that it examines social phenomena like class, or even that it borrows from social theory to give shape and meaning to the past. The problem is the way social historians do these things—the specific theories they deploy and the kinds of conclusions they draw.

Two features distinguish the kinds of social history Himmelfarb reproves. One is their use of the behavioralist social sciences (usually, in this country, functionalist sociology or neoclassical economics). The other is their concentration on everyday life, customs, and social relations, usually among the middling or lower orders. Many of these studies (and even Himmelfarb must admit this) have made enormous contributions in charting the unknown contours of material life, popular consciousness, and social development. At their worst, they have degenerated into what C. Wright Mills called crackpot empiricism, the amassing of statistical series and folkish literary remains to no discernible historical purpose.

Himmelfarb, however, inveighs against how the new social historians slight politics and ideas. Those most drawn to the social sciences, she notes, often make the mistake of trying to decide what people really thought strictly on the basis of some behavioral trend, judging motives and causes on the basis of outcomes or effects. Social-science historians tend to be cynical about ideas, treating them either as euphemistic glosses on self-interest or as the detritus of demographic and economic forces. Less statistically minded social historians, meanwhile, imagine that social relations can be studied in pristine isolation from political institutions and the life of the mind; at times, with a kind of reverse snobbery, they seem to insist that the mundane practices of ordinary people are somehow more important than events like the American Revolution or the Civil War. Politics in the new social history usually gets reduced to tautological abstractions like "social control." Thoughts, ideals, morality—indeed, human agency—all but disappear.

Himmelfarb's recital of all this is impressive less for its originality (much of it has been said before, sometimes by self-critical social historians) than for its urgency. So urgent, in fact, are these essays that we lose sight of what the

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new social history has to offer. The real pity, though, is that while Himmelfarb presents herself as the defender of the history of ideas, she says so little about the American intellectual origins of the new social history itself. She does observe that some of today's trendier themes date back well into the nineteenth century, and she makes passing references to more recent influences, from Fernand Braudel and the French *Annales* school to the 1960s American preoccupations with black, feminist, and populist history. Surely these are part of the story; another, larger part takes us not to Paris, but to places like Morningside Heights and to the 1950s, not the 1960s. Beginning with the postwar, liberal background of today's new scholarship, this little chapter in recent intellectual history highlights some ironic political connections, along with the narrowness of the ground Himmelfarb has now chosen to occupy. Since she does not bother with this history, let us sketch it out for ourselves.

Origins of the New History

Much of today's new history—the new social history in particular—originated not as a revolt against tradition but in the efforts of 1950s liberals to supplant the legacy of the Progressive historians and of 1930s Marxism. The list of those involved reads like a postwar American Historical Association honor roll. One was the brilliant historian Richard Hofstadter, who in his numerous books (notably *The Age of Reform*) disdained conventional narrative and the old-fashioned history of ideas, drew freely on postwar social scientific concepts like "status anxiety," and lavished attention on third-rate political writers, all as a way to understand a broader American "political culture." Another was Oscar Handlin, whose writings and teachings in the 1940s and 1950s, influenced as they were by Parsonian sociology, did much to lay the groundwork for the new social history of immigrants and city life. Daniel Boorstin was a third; although Boorstin stuck more closely than others to narrative, his books vaunted the importance of social process and argued the unsettling thesis that ideas were basically irrelevant to American politics and culture. Then there was Seymour Martin Lipset, who, though formally a sociologist, did as much as anyone to introduce American historians to postwar social science. Alongside these men were many other historians who joined in what Hofstadter called a "monographic uprising" that began, roughly, in 1950.

Although hardly of a single mind, these scholars shared a great deal besides their common interest in the American past. Many came from urban, non-WASP (usually Jewish) backgrounds, forming that first generation of outsiders to make it big into a profession long blighted by bigotry. Most were reared on the writings of Progressive historians like James Harvey Robinson, Charles Beard, and Arthur Schlesinger, Sr. And most shared a certain political trajectory as well. Few, if any, were conservatives; some were New Deal liberals; a surprisingly large number (at least among the most prominent) had been young radicals. As early as the 1940s, some of them began questioning the simplifications and silences in Progressive history; ten years later, virtually all had soured on whatever sympathies they had with Marxism and the left. Repulsed by the sentimentalism and moral blindness of the Popular Front, fed up with the sectarianism of Trotskyists and ex-Trotskyists, chilled (in some cases) by cold war hysteria, most would have described themselves as pluralist liberals—not optimistic do-gooders, but men of that modernist, tragic frame of mind that Lionel Trilling associated with the liberal imagination.[4] Impressed with American capitalism's resilience, skeptical of radical causes, they searched for new ways to come to terms with American history in an age when all ideology seemed bankrupt.

Hardly any of these 1950s liberals considered reverting to a political narrative history that they associated all too easily with the genteel tradition. As young outsiders-turned-insiders, they still wanted answers to questions that had first interested them in history: What were the economic, cultural, and religious bases of political authority? Why was there no socialism in America? How did the immigrant experience or the frontier experience affect national development? How did psychological and symbolic factors affect the past?

Much of this writing has since been lumped together as the consensus school—a label that often hides as much as it reveals. Quite apart,

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though, from their various conclusions, these historians and their graduate students shared an affinity for new subjects and new methods—and especially for insights of the social sciences. Hofstadter once explicated what some of these innovations were: By looking to psychology, the sociology of knowledge, functional analysis, public opinion polls, and quantitative methods, the historians of the 1950s and early 1960s sought to make "the entire sociological penumbra of political life" into "an organic part of historical thinking." In Hofstadter's estimation, they succeeded both in toppling the classic works of the Progressives and in releasing historians' speculative capacities and research energies.

This, as much as anything, initiated the trends Himmelfarb now rejects—for the work of the 1950s liberals carried with it (in the jargon of the day) certain latent dysfunctions. At the very moment that so many historians began looking to the social sciences for help, the social sciences were scrapping the historical dimension of their work: sociologists with their opinion surveys, economists with their marketplace models of *homo economicus*, political scientists with their gerry-built indexes of relative deprivation. This shift toward "value-free" theory often carried with it a political burden—to elevate the values of the postwar capitalist democracies as "normative," "modern," and therefore desirable. At another level, the more these approaches proliferated, the more they sapped historical studies of their sense of context and human agency. Set alongside what Hofstadter called the "anti-intellectualist" current exemplified in Boorstin's writings, they tended to slight ideas as well. But these shortcomings were not immediately evident, even to a scholar as respectful of ideas as Hofstadter. Instead, at a time when America was just beginning its love affair with computers and sociological "experts"—and with public and private agencies eager to fund almost anything that sounded "scientific"—the new social history became an academic growth industry. By the mid-1960s social history had begun to look increasingly like a branch of the social sciences. And, with that, the field began to attract the number-crunchers, antiquarians, and crackpot empiricists who now populate it.

Criticizing the Scholarship

This backward glance reminds us of something that Himmelfarb obscures: The new history's motivating impulse was not to efface politics and ideas or subject them to some sort of sociological tyranny, but to interpret them anew, in their broadest historical context. It also clarifies where much of the new history made its wrong turn—in its resolution of the flight from 1930s Marxism and Progressivism more than thirty years ago, and in particular in its fascination with the social sciences. Not that we should blame the 1950s liberals for all the subsequent excesses and stupidities of the new social history. Nevertheless, if the 1950s liberals steered clear of the most odious kinds of pseudohistory, their sympathy for and use of the social sciences (along with Boorstin's anti-intellectualist stance) certainly helped lead American historical scholarship down what Himmelfarb considers the primrose path.

It is hard not to notice an apparent paradox here: Several of the 1950s liberals who helped inspire the new history—scholars like Handlin, Boorstin, and Lipset—are today neoconservatives. Himmelfarb should not be included in this group; while her own political shifts have taken her over the years from sectarian leftism through liberalism to the hard right, she has always written fairly traditional intellectual history—studies of Lord Acton, John Stuart Mill and so on. Still, there is a temptation to wonder if Himmelfarb's polemics ought to be thrown back in her direction. Perhaps this seeming irony is a mere coincidence. Or perhaps there is more to it, as part of a generational history of successive renunciations, first of the left, then of liberalism. One might even ask whether the new social history wasn't, at least in part, the outgrowth of an earlier phase of the neoconservatives' fitful march to the right. Either way, it is curious that Himmelfarb's account sidesteps these matters, leaving us with a flat impression of the new social history as some sort of "radical" enterprise out to subvert history and reason. More

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curious still is another, rather more important set of ironies—about the new social history and the left.

Attacks on the new social history began almost as soon as the field consolidated its gains in the mid-1960s. Such criticism has come primarily from four directions. Now and then, some older humanists have raised alarms, none more eloquently than Jacques Barzun. Starting in the mid-1970s, there have come the snipings of the neoconservatives, enraged by what they perceive as history's capitulation to the radical left and the counterculture. Over the last decade, meanwhile, a third stream of criticism has emerged from the new social historians themselves—from those who have tried to preserve the field's animating spirit. Alerted, at last, to the scholarly limits and presentist biases of social science behavioralism, a growing number of them have begun trying to take politics and ideas more seriously. Many have come to agree with Lawrence Stone that it might be time for historians to jump "the social scientific ship, which appears to be leaking and undergoing major repair."

Some of the new social history's most impassioned critics, however, have come from another quarter entirely—the same rejuvenated left that sends the neoconservatives into paroxysms. Indeed, leftist historians were quicker than most to see what was wrong in the new scholarship. British radical historians led the way, in works like E.P. Thompson's *The Making of the English Working Class* (published in 1963, in part as a ringing response to social science interpretations of the Industrial Revolution) and Christopher Hill's assault on Peter Laslett's quanto-opus, *The World We Have Lost*. American radicals quickly followed suit, in monographs, articles, and reviews that culminated, in the mid-1970s, in Herbert Gutman's *Slavery and the Numbers Game* and Eugene Genovese and Elizabeth Fox-Genovese's caustic essay, "The Political Crisis of Social History." What's more, large portions of these radical critiques bore striking resemblances to those delivered (often later) from other corners of the profession. Labor historians excoriated social science treatments of class that were so "obsessively concerned with methodology" that they proceeded "to the exclusion of the examination of a single real class situation in a real historical context." Other radicals lamented the new social history's "philistine disregard for the centrality of politics" along with its "willful pretense at 'value-free' analysis which drains any notion of consciousness or interest." Still others wrote of the "reductive fallacy" and the search for "monocausal explanations" in the new work.

The 1960s radical historians were a diverse and fractious group. They produced their full share of bad history books, spoiled by sentimental hero worship, ahistorical moralizing, naive romantic visions of the Third World, and a "Marxist" variant of functionalist sociology. But much radical history was splendid. Building on diverse theoretical currents—from Gramscian Marxism to postwar feminism—the best works broke free of the limits of "official" leftism; with an empirical hardihood as vigorous as anything in the mainstream, they opened up new views on everything from the history of slavery to the politics of women's suffrage. It was these radical historians—Marxists, non-Marxists, feminists, and others—who, in their own research as well as their criticisms of others, provided the new social history with some of its stiffest challenges, precisely on the grounds that it slighted politics, consciousness, ideas, and human agency.

The ironies here are arresting. In the late 1960s and early 1970s the arrival of the new radical historians threw some 1950s liberals into fits, which in turn hastened the emergence of academic neoconservativism. Beneath the *sturm und drang*, however, some of the most influential radicals were raising fundamental objections to the kinds of new history that 1950s liberal historians (including some who have since become neoconservatives) had once helped inspire. Now, twenty years on, neoconservatives like Himmelfarb are raising some of the same objections the radicals have been raising all along—but in the name of protecting traditional history from radical perversions!

Himmelfarb is too prudent to ignore this strange convergence altogether. Yet to sustain her argument she must prove that the radicals are somehow (if only unconsciously) allied

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with the other new historians, in a common front against traditionalism. She seizes on one strand of radical history, Marxism, paying close attention to the writings of such postwar British Marxist historians as Thompson, Hill, and E.J. Hobsbawm.

At one level, Himmelfarb's critique is a blanket indictment of all Marxist scholarship. "Marxism," she forthrightly declares "has succeeded in this: in demeaning and denigrating political events, institutions, activities, and ideas." One wonders, though, exactly which Marxist histories she means. Trotsky's *History of the Russian Revolution?* W.E.B. Du Bois on Reconstruction? Albert Soboul on the French Revolution? Whatever their faults, the classics of Marxist history cannot be accused of abasing or ignoring political events, institutions, and ideas. Himmelfarb explains her meaning: It is the Marxists' economic determinism that slights politics and ideas, in ways so similar to the rest of the new history. Whereas once "[i]t was only the Marxist who regarded politics as the epiphenomenon of history," now (alas) almost all historians do.

This is, by any reckoning, a muddle. Marxist historians have never been the sole or even the major purveyors of economic determinism: In the United States, for example, it was the decidedly non-Marxist Charles Beard who established the economic interpretation of history as an important intellectual force. Moreover, as Himmelfarb herself goes on to observe, the economic determinist strain in Marxist history has, over the last three decades, come under withering attack from the left. Indeed, as she admits, nearly all of the British writers under discussion have rejected that model, which relegates politics and consciousness to the epiphenomenal "superstructure."

What, then, is wrong with contemporary radical history as exemplified by Thompson *et al.*? We might expect Himmelfarb to be razor-sharp about this, considering that some of these Marxists write in her own field of expertise. Certainly there has been no shortage of strong and valid criticisms of the British Marxists' work, from almost every vantage point. Yet Himmelfarb's criticisms beg more questions than they answer. She accuses the British Marxists of being "excessively materialistic"—but never draws the delicate line that demarcates excessive from appropriate materialism. She charges that recent Marxist writings appear to be "a continuation of politics by other means"—a baffling passage given that some pages earlier she flatly equates politics with the pursuit of reason. The British Marxists, she says, renounce "empirical" history and prefer their "predetermined schema"—leading us to ask why E.P. Thompson, probably the most influential of the lot, has spent so much of his time defending history as a preeminently empirical pursuit, the sworn foe of predetermined models. Finally, she notes, they were once, to a man, loyal Stalinists who have insufficiently accounted for their previous crimes against scholarship.

This last point touches off alarms. There is plenty in the early writings of the British Marxists that can be held aloft for ridicule and condemnation: Paeans to the Soviet dictatorship, nice words about Lysenko and "socialist science," all the fudging and flummery to be expected from a group of young, would-be intellectuals who (as Hobsbawm recalls) "were apt to fall into the stern and wooden style of the disciplined Bolshevik cadres." So, in the work of some of the Victorian narrative historians Himmelfarb admires, one finds all sorts of hair-raising statements about exotic foreigners and the sham of constitutional liberty. And so (as we keep finding out) there are dirty hands among scholars, living and dead, all along the political spectrum.

A knee-jerk reaction would be to accuse Himmelfarb of applying a singular standard to those who were taken in by Stalin—demanding full recantations from them alone. But while this is true—and to Himmelfarb's discredit—it is also an evasion. The British Marxists (most of whom left the Communist party in or around 1956) have certainly been candid about their former adherence to the party line; most have pointed to the ways "Stalinist pieties" distorted their earlier writings. And no one can accuse, say, E.P. Thompson of still harboring illusions about communism and the Soviet Union—not when he has written so eloquently of the "exterminist" logic of both super power blocs. As a group, though, the British Marxists have had to struggle with one of the tragedies of

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modern intellectual life: Why it took so long—until 1956—for such brilliant scholars to begin to face up to things about the party that almost all of their most benighted countrymen had known for years.

Pride, no doubt, played a part in this, as well as sentimental attachments and an abiding disgust at the creepy conformism of various remorseful ex-communists. But also, perhaps, a certain confusion—that all-too familiar idea that to break too far from one's radical past is to renounce radicalism, or to give ideological advantage to the ruling class. When, for example, Thompson wrote in 1973 of his refusal to follow "the well-worn paths of apostasy" or become a "Public Confessor and Renegade," he left the impression that to say too much, too loudly, about communism is to turn into Whittaker Chambers. Surely, as ex-communists like Richard Wright tried to show, this is not the case.

Himmelfarb, however, instead of exploring this struggle and giving a full exposition of her antagonists' evolving views, pastes up some collected snippets from their writings and tries to score political points. Her argument really rests not on what the British Marxists wrote in 1952, nor on their political pronouncements since 1956, but on their failure to renounce radicalism *tout court*. Whatever their autobiographical reticence (and even Himmelfarb must acknowledge they have hardly been *silent*) the British Marxists have worked through their political and theoretical reasoning for all to see in their historical writings. But this is not enough for Himmelfarb, who would have them change their research agendas entirely and write scholarly studies of Marxism and communism. And when faced with the task of herself refuting the "substantive philosophy" of recent British Marxist history, her analysis descends to the point of intellectual shiftiness. The Marxist, she grandly asserts (as if there were only one type) selects facts to suit prearranged theses and ignores facts that might undermine orthodox doctrine. As proof, she produces what appears to be an admission of guilt from E.J. Hobsbawm. The trouble is, she wrenches this smoking gun from some self-critical Hobsbawm reminiscences about standard operating procedure among the Communist historians *in the 1940s and early 1950s*. Anyone expecting a more searching, informative, conservative appraisal of current trends in British Marxist history (or any kind of radical history) will not find it here. Himmelfarb is too busy posturing.

Is There a Common Ground?

Had Himmelfarb really wanted to make good on her interest in history's well-being, she might have made a greater effort to establish where she and so many of her antagonists share common ground. She also might have pondered why so many historians have chafed at some of the premises of the old history. Instead, she belabors the negative in the new scholarship, celebrates conventional history, and resists the notion that the two might actually inform one another. Such a reconciliation is not only possible, it is taking place. But to carry it through requires a recognition of the deficiencies in Himmelfarb's brand of traditionalism as well as in the work she chastises.

Traditional political narrative or the history of ideas—the old history—can never be dispensed with. If we are to understand anything of, say, American slavery and its demise, then an understanding of who said what to whom concerning the Compromise of 1850 or the drafting of the Emancipation Proclamation (and on what date) is obviously important. So are the political writings of John C. Calhoun and Thaddeus Stevens. And so is a recognition that politicians and statesmen usually follow a pragmatic logic that heeds self-interest as well as loftier ideals.

But this is not enough. The specifics of changing social structure, popular thought, divisions of class and color, ethnicity and gender—in short, all of what Hofstadter called "the sociological penumbra"—must be kept at the center as well. Likewise, historians need to explore how the exercise and changing structure of power outside of formal politics affects political institutions and ideas, and vice versa. Recent Marxist and radical history at least has the virtue of grappling with these issues. To do so was the inspiration behind the rest of today's new history, no matter what methodological dead ends it may have run into. Of course, posing such questions can be a dangerous

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business, from a neoconservative as well as a traditionalist standpoint. Straying too far from the confines of the old history opens up the possibility that professors and students might begin to perceive gaps between everyday realities and those grand Anglo-American principles—of "liberty and right, checks and balances, self-government and good government"—that Himmelfarb would have our history impart.

She will not have it: The differences between these two modes, she says, have become so profound that they amount to "different conceptions of history." It ought to be all the more embarrassing, then, for Himmelfarb to look through some of the more publicized and acclaimed historical works published over the past few years, among them James McPherson's *Battle Cry of Freedom*, Nell Irvin Painter's *Standing at Armageddon*, and Eric Foner's *Reconstruction: America's Unfinished Revolution*. All are organized as chronological narratives. All focus heavily on "traditional" subjects—wars, treaties, legislatures, political movements. Yet none is an "old history" of the kind Himmelfarb venerates; all make abundant use of the new history's finding and insights; all propose broadly social interpretations while endeavoring to avoid determinism. Clearly something is happening here, and Himmelfarb doesn't know what it is—or at least she didn't anticipate it when she put her book together. Historians—especially American historians—have decided that there is little point in pitting old against new, that the time has come to transform and combine both modes.

It is doubtful that Himmelfarb's one-sided strictures ever could have cut much ice, at least in this country. If they did, historians would have to cast a jaundiced eye on the motives and thinking behind some of the most suggestive postwar historical writing, not simply of those she criticizes directly, but of Richard Hofstadter, Oscar Handlin, Daniel Boorstin, Bernard Bailyn, Edmund S. Morgan, C. Vann Woodward, David H. Donald, David Brion Davis, John Hope Franklin, Eugene Genovese, Herbert Gutman, Linda Gordon, and so many others. Moreover, they would have to overcome what Himmelfarb herself points to as a certain American distrust of essentially political, essentially narrative history. Of course, this country has produced some grand political narrators, descending in acuity and literary skill from Henry Adams to James Ford Rhodes. But going back to George Bancroft in the 1830s, American historians, even when writing about politics and thought, have shown an impatience with political narrative and the history of ideas, preferring to pursue larger philosophical, social, and psychological themes: Parkman and his forests, Turner and the frontier, Beard and his economic interpretations, Du Bois and the souls of black folk. It was no new historian, but Ralph Waldo Emerson who spoke of "what a shallow village tale our so-called History is," and of how we must write our annals "broader and deeper if we would truly express our central and wide-related nature, instead of this old chronology of selfishness and pride." A bit mystical, maybe, but the heart still vibrates to that string more than it does to Himmelfarb's. Call it the democratic impulse in history writing. And make the best of it. □

Notes

[1] Which is not to say the last eight years have been without conservative influences. The hounding of the Marxist historian David Abraham, the filiopiety of the Constitution bicentennial, the Meesian theory of "original intent," evangelical celebrations of our biblical republic (the list goes on) have all made their mark. My concern here, though, is with the actual writing of history and the specific criticisms of the neoconservatives.

[2] To her credit, Himmelfarb has dissociated herself publicly from at least one of Cantor's tirades. See her letter to the *New Criterion*, March 1986, pp. 84–85. More recently, Cantor has tried to align American neoconservativism with the intellectual legacy of European fascism.

[3] Himmelfarb also singles out the work of Theodore Zeldin. Zeldin's interpretive style is, however, so idiosyncratic that it cannot be attached to any group.

[4] Daniel Boorstin might be counted as an exception here. Having made his separate peace with McCarthyism and the House Un-American Activities Committee in the 1950s, Boorstin moved into a rather different sort of cold war pluralism.

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Jürgen Habermas

TWENTY YEARS LATER

1968 & the West German Republic

Jürgen Habermas, one of Germany's most important political and philosophical thinkers, gave an interview—conducted by Rainer Erd—to the Frankfurter Rundschau *last March. Though it deals with specific events in West Germany, this interview should be of much interest to American readers, who will notice both parallels and divergences from our own situation. It will be included in Jürgen Habermas,* The New Conservatism: Cultural Criticism and the Historians' Debate, *edited and translated by Shierry Weber Nicholson (MIT Press, 1989). We thank Professor Habermas for permission to use this text, as well as the MIT Press.*

Bracketed explanatory remarks are by the translator. In a few instances we have added explanatory footnotes.—EDS.

Erd: Professor Habermas, this spring members of my generation, now reaching forty, are looking back on a date that seemed to make relevant social change possible. In spring 1968 a movement that demanded more than social movements traditionally demand made its worldwide debut. The student movement not only advocated institutional changes, like university reform; it also advocated individual emancipation in a comprehensive sense. It declared war on classical institutions of bourgeois society such as marriage and the nuclear family as much as on the structural division between manual and mental labor.

Not only were the political institutions of parliamentary democracy (and the three fundamental domains of parliament, law, and administration) subjected to a fundamental critique; the international division of labor was subjected to the same critique. The spectrum of demands made by the student movement extended from individual emancipation to new forms of life and living arrangements, to changes in the economy, society, and the state, and the abolition of the division between the First, Second, and Third Worlds.

Obviously, much of what was demanded at that time has not become reality. Yet to think that the conservatism of the past years has revoked the changes of the 1970s is fundamentally to misjudge the political situation at the end of the 1980s. How do you see this? What has the student movement left us?

Habermas: Mrs. Süssmuth [Rita Süssmuth, minister of family affairs in the Kohl government]. A liberal minister of family affairs of this type would scarcely have been thinkable in a Christian Democratic government prior to 1968. I am not being altogether ironic; this fact indicates something. The march through the institutions has reached even the Christian Democratic party—not just social work, the schools, the kindergarten, or the media. And furthermore, the fact that Mrs. Süssmuth has extended her province to include women's issues and has given some remarkable twists to traditional family and youth policies, at least in their outward appearance, is symptomatic of a shift in boundaries.

The definition of what is political has changed since 1968. It is now taken for granted that much of what was once implicitly considered part of the private sphere is a matter of politics—the relations between the sexes, for example ("marital violence"), or the status of housework and childrearing, etc. Private needs have been politicized. And then we have to ask what Heiner Geissler [general secretary of the Christian Democratic party], who is so cool and calculating, was responding to when he

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decided to appoint this kind of a woman. He was in fact responding to a subliminal change in attitudes among segments of the population.

It is precisely in these subinstitutional domains that there are now signs of a liberalizing thrust. Karl Mannheim once spoke of a fundamental democratization. We haven't got that far yet. But a process of fundamental liberalization set in motion by the cultural revolution of that period—you can see something of that. Changes in interpersonal relations in families, schools, universities, and even the courtroom do not affect deeply rooted social inequalities, but still, they are not nothing.

Erd: There is no publicly relevant domain in the Federal Republic where one does not find traces of 1968. In the legal domain, for instance, especially in the socially sensitive areas of labor and constitutional law, there are now judges whose positions cut across prevailing arguments.

Habermas: And in Mutlangen younger lawyers are even engaging in civil disobedience [protesting the stationing of missiles]. But when we talk about 1968 and what came after, we should also take a step back and look at the incubation period—Adenauer's last years, the Erhard interim, the Grand Coalition. Bauer, the Hessian state attorney general, had set in motion the first Auschwitz trial. Later the first debate on the statute of limitations [for Nazi crimes] was successful. Discussions began about our policy on Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union. Karl Jaspers became radicalized. The social studies curriculum was reformed. In those years between 1960 and 1968 noninstitutionalized public opinion was becoming increasingly important. Then the student movement came as a one- to two-year explosion that no one had foreseen. A neoconservatism that in our country is particularly full of *ressentiment* soon concocted a kind of counterrevolution. Marcuse's contrast between "counterrevolution and revolt" fits the German scene in the 1970s quite well—as though emotions discredited under the shadow of Nazi crimes were only waiting for an occasion to rise again.

Erd: Professor Habermas, at the end of the 1960s one had the impression that you were one of the student movement's chief opponents. After you spoke of the "left fascism" of the student movement, the theoreticians of the left attacked you and reproached you with supporting the conservative cause.

Habermas: To speak to that only briefly: I made this reproach in the form of a hypothetical question in Hanover in 1967, very spontaneously and in a very specific context; I explained it immediately, and in 1977 I retracted it altogether—much to Rudi Dutschke's satisfaction. I tried at that time to explain why left-wing intellectuals in the Federal Republic reacted to the first signs of a rhetoric of violence and the use of violence in a way that was touchier, more fastidious, more irritable than their friends in other countries. I had already spoken out in May 1968 against the dubious distinction between "violence against things" and "violence against persons."

Erd: Your criticism that the student movement overestimated the real possibilities for action has been confirmed by the history of the past twenty years. When we see how such symbolic figures of 1968 as Daniel Cohn-Bendit are now defending the market and parliamentary democracy, we get the impression that the portion of the student movement that is today politically influential has implicitly accepted the critique you made then. On the other hand, you are now criticized by the conservatives.

Habermas: I see that, my dear Dr. Erd, a little differently. I have always been a red flag for the conservatives. Even in 1953, when I criticized Heidegger, people saw me as a spokesman for Adorno,* although at the time, as a naive student in Bonn, I had had no contact with the Frankfurt people. My critique of a specific form of student action in 1968–69 had more of an internal character—and that is also how it was taken.

Erd: Still, the conservatives' tone has become sharper. Especially in *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung,* and with Joachim Fest [one of the editors] and Konrad Adam taking

* Martin Heidegger, the German philosopher, whose membership in the Nazi party has recently occasioned wide debate among European intellectuals. Theodore Adorno, theorist of the "Frankfurt school," a figure of the left.

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the lead, they are even making you jointly responsible for acts of political terrorism. To be held responsible, first by the left and now by the conservatives, for things with which you really have had noting to do—is that the price an intellectual who is critical and politically committed has to pay? Or is it specific to the political culture of the Federal Republic that intellectual opponents are categorized as political enemies regardless of the reality?

Habermas: Anybody who enters the sphere of public politics and criticizes other people cannot be a crybaby himself. There is always something comical in the picture of the innocent prosecutor. And the syndrome of violence is deeply entrenched in all of us. Intellectual controversies are characterized as political battles elsewhere as well. Here, though, we are under the suspicion of being not only political opponents but "domestic enemies"—about that you're right. In a country that has never experienced a revolution, the right-wing intelligentsia—from Carl Schmitt to Ernst Nolte—stirs up the citizens' fear of civil war and constructs theories on the basis of it. Furthermore, the mandarin consciousness, recently examined by Hauke Brunkhorst in a notable book, is specific to the German university tradition. One part of it is hatred of the intellectual; another is a distorted understanding of politics. Mandarins always speak in the exalted name of science and scholarship. Even when they enter the sphere of public politics, they do not accept the rules of the game and the presuppositions of communication in that sphere.

Clearly this is how the historians Hillgruber and Nolte emerged from the university to disseminate ideas whose target was our self-understanding as citizens of the Federal Republic. They did not think of themselves as intellectuals who were bringing their technical expertise into the discourse of the public appropriation of tradition. They actually thought—at least that is what they said—they were engaged in scholarship, nothing but pure scholarship. They were willing to participate in the public discourse of this country only with the privileges accorded experts and under the cover of scholarship. It is only in terms of this very German ideology that I can explain the reproach leveled against me by these and other historians. When one tried to explain to them that in the sphere of public politics comparisons between what happened in the concentration camps and what happened on the Eastern Front, or comparisons between Auschwitz and Dresden, lose their alleged scholarly innocence and necessarily turn into a settling of accounts, they took it as a "ban on thought and inquiry."

Erd: If we compare the current political situation with that of twenty years ago, two things are especially striking. The political spectrum has been extended, on both left and right. Today left-wing terrorism, which after the Red Army Faction was taken over in part by groups like the Autonomen, is as much a part of everyday politics as radical-right groups. But the spectrum of legal politics has also been extended on both left and right. Since the beginning of the 1980s conservatism has been dominant in the Federal Republic, modified to a certain extent by the Greens. And in the realm of journalism the once liberal *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung* has developed into a conservative and sometimes radical-right paper, while the left has found an organ in the "taz" (*Tageszeitung*, daily paper).

Habermas: For obvious reasons neither a classical left nor a classical right has been able to develop in the Federal Republic. We have neither a strong Communist party nor a Le Pen [the French neofascist leader] and the neofascists. But the more things are normalized here, forty years later, the more the integrative power of a strong center makes for concealment as well. The fluid boundaries between neoconservatism and the radical right, as at Weikersheim or in *MUT*, are obscured.* The lines are becoming blurred on the left too, if we think of the neutralist nationalism of some Berlin subcultures.

Erd: My question is, are conservatism and the peace movement as well as left-wing and

* Weikersheim is a town in which there occurred a gathering of the radical right. *MUT* is a magazine of the radical right, which published in February 1988 a letter from Chancellor Helmut Kohl saying he was a "regular reader" of it.

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right-wing radicalism results of the structural problems of the left-liberal era of the 1970s?

Habermas: The agreement on missile deployment that Helmut Schmidt [former Social Democratic prime minister] pushed through, a climate in which efforts at reform had failed, and other things drove many people in the Social Democratic party to the left, while at the same time, in a climate of *ressentiment*, the unabashed pressure of capital, unemployment, and the weakness of the unions helped the right. These are normal swings of the pendulum. You ask why the pendulum is swinging again now. Apart from stagnation in the international economy, structural changes in the economy at home, technical and demographic developments, and especially the social consequences of unemployment—apart from these obvious problems, there has also been a change in the way the public perceives problems.

We see on the one hand a habituation to crises that are becoming widespread and diffuse. These appear in a form in which accelerated change stabilizes itself. But on the other hand the reactions to these crises are also becoming more subjective, more governed by mood, more eccentric. I notice a certain fin-de-siècle mood, a feeling that time is running out. Every day postmodernism is gaining ground.

This mood is double-edged: it makes some people subdued and causes others to flip out. This may also be connected with our greater distance from 1945. For the first time, the Federal Republic is acquiring historical contours of its own. It is becoming possible to survey its life cycle. We have reached a point from which it is easy to divide postwar history into phases: First, the years up to the currency reform, the restoration phase, which was important both symbolically and economically—the majority of the population was still dazed by the collapse of the Nazi regime; the voices of an antifascist coalition that would soon disintegrate were still muffled by suspicious Allies. Then, under Adenauer, a very long latency period characterized by an aggressive, constructive will that was channeled into the private sphere—with a division of labor between "No experiments" and the opposition of the literati. Then, a period of incubation, the first stirrings of unrest, the economic crisis of 1967, and the [student] revolt. And finally, the two very contrary pulses of thirteen years of a social-liberal coalition, which made more changes in the soft flesh of motivations and mentalities under the surface of institutions than in the hard stone of the bureaucracy.

And today we have the ambiguous *juste-milieu*, the right environment, of the cheerful Yuppies atop a base of the silent unemployed. These phases, I think, are now discernible from a contemporary perspective and not only from that of the historian. And it is only from this distance, with the awareness of a regained normality, that that past, the pluperfect past that will not pass away, acquires tremendous contemporary relevance. Perhaps this is the kind of normality that is possible for us after Auschwitz. And the more extreme swings of the pendulum that you mentioned are part of this.

Erd: It is characteristic of our period that the question of who champions an emancipatory concept of society is no longer necessarily to be answered in terms of organizations. Earlier, one would have had valid grounds for naming the Social Democrats and the unions as the institutions of social change, but the situation is now fundamentally different. The political landscape of the Federal Republic can no longer be divided into "conservative" and "emancipatory" organizations. Instead, one finds both positions throughout the whole spectrum of parties. There are groups in the Christian Democratic party that represent much more emancipatory ideas than the orthodox cadres of the Social Democratic party, although of course the converse is also true. It now seems indisputable that the left's traditional idea of relativizing positions of economic authority and leveling social inequality through state intervention is no longer applicable. If this is correct . . .

Habermas: May I interrupt you? When it comes to "right" and "left" I am old-fashioned. Take only the most important themes in social policy. For instance, the status of gainful employment has become problem-

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atic, there is the idea of a minimum income for everyone; which Oscar Lafontaine [a Social Democratic leader] has now taken up—in other words, a relative decoupling of income and employment. Or in legal policy—the key words there are internal security, the right to asylum, civil disobedience, a communal right to vote for foreign workers, etc. Or the national theme, the old standby of reunification. On these "issues" opinions diverge very quickly. Of course you are correct in saying that *all* the parties—and the Greens set the pace—are involved in a reorientation. This include the Free Democratic party, which had initially regressed to a purely economic party of the Weimar type.

Erd: If everyone is looking for alternative orientations, what do you consider the most important political problems of the immediate future.

Habermas: On that I have nothing original to say; I read the papers like everyone else. The problems of armaments and arms export, the problem of the ecological reconstruction of industrial society and the Third World, and especially our number one problem: With the labor unions on the defensive, how can we stop the Social Darwinism of the "two-thirds society" [with two-thirds of the population affluent and one-third permanently marginalized]? How can we strengthen the solidarity of those who remain inside with those on the outside, those who are excluded or marginalized—at least all that is out in the open and is being discussed.

Another theme has become interesting, one which, as you know, I have been concerned with for thirty years: the structural transformation of the public sphere and the prospects for radical democracy. The electoral strategists and the electoral sociologists are most aware of it. We are now feeling the effects of an educational revolution, of the women's movement, which is finally making progress, and of the electronic media. One feels it here in the Frankfurt area: the cultural orientations of broad strata of the population are being transformed. The catch-phrase "postmaterial values" is not completely inaccurate. The new constellation of culture and politics interests me. Election results are clearly increasingly dependent on a perception of individual political problems that is theme-dependent, well informed, and thus culturally mediated.

That too is a long-term consequence of 1968. Looser party ties may be symptomatic of the fact that more and more people are demanding the use-value of democracy and the constitutional state. They want democracy in the ready cash of the active utilization of individual liberties, more political participation, individualized mass consumption. And thus counter-political spheres arise that are close to the base, not only in the metropolitan subcultures, around the Greens, but also in disadvantaged marginal groups that we have always said could not be organized and were incapable of action.

The more mass civilization prevails and comes to be taken for granted, the more it loses the aura of a "revolt of the masses" against civilization, and the more the romanticism of mass action, which has dazzled the left long enough, fades away. The new perspective is that of a society in which autonomous public spheres multiply and can form subversive counterbalances to the highly organized public sphere that was bequeathed us.

Perhaps at some point even the political parties will be compelled to reorganize, or at least to differentiate clearly between two opposing functions. For they should do more than just select leadership personnel for the next government, be a component of the political system, and extract mass loyalty from the public. They should be a more forceful presence within the public sphere and function as a catalyst, clarifying and concentrating opinions rather than creating them.

The utopias of a society of work are out of date. Socialism will survive only if it takes seriously the utopian element within democratic procedures themselves. The procedural utopia focuses on the structures and presuppositions for a radical-pluralistic, largely decentralized process that produces complexity and is certainly costly, a process the content and outcomes of which no one can—or should want to—anticipate.

Erd: We keep hearing it said that up this

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point the "historians' debate"* has produced one conspicuous result: It has made public the weakness of the conservative argument and thereby has hindered conservative groups in the Federal Republic more than it has helped them. For in public opinion in the Federal Republic there seems quite obviously to be a consensus that nazism was a unique historical phenomenon and can certainly not be understood as a reaction to bolshevism. Looked at this way, the "historians' debate" was the test of the political culture that arose in the Federal Republic after 1968. And it stood the test well.

Habermas: The fact that Hans-Ulrïch Wehler, one of the German historians most highly regarded here and abroad, has expressed himself so clearly, unambiguously, and convincingly in his book on the historians' debate may confirm your impression. I don't want to underestimate the political culture's powers of self-purification—think of the Barschel incident [Uwe Barschel, Christian Democratic minister-president of Schleswig Holstein, resigned following allegations of unethical electioneering against the Social Democrats and was later found dead in a hotel room]. But if it were not for the larger picture, the détente between the superpowers or the waning of neoconservatism, the Christian Democratic leadership might not have hesitated to leap onto the bandwagon that Dregger and Strauss** were piloting to an *"entsorgte Vergangenheit,"* a past that no longer causes concern.

And further: Beneath the debate on the question in what sense the Nazi mass crimes were unique lies the deeper question of what attitude we want to take toward the continuities of German history—whether we can affirm our political existence while maintaining a clear awareness of a break with our more sinister traditions. Can we, and do we want to, give up the comforts and the dangers of a conventional identity that is incompatible with a *critical* appropriation of traditions? Nationalism is as virulent as ever. This question, I am afraid, has not yet come to the fore. . . .

Erd: I believe that now, in contrast to earlier phases in German history, we can look to the political future of the Federal Republic with a certain composure. In the past twenty years a political culture has developed that has enough stability to set limits to fundamental conservative revisions. Can we, then, look ahead—with vigilance, of course—but nevertheless without getting worked up?

Habermas: In that I still hear an echo of Max Weber's complaint about the "sterile excitation" of the intellectuals—Arnold Gehlen used it to put together his critique of intellectuals. There are things I get upset about—a sentence, for instance, by the New York correspondent to the *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*'s feuilleton section in the February 13 supplement: "Dozens of cosmetic surgeons made their living from the fact that many Jews tried to assimilate their noses to the Anglo-Saxon ideal of beauty. Only after Barbra Streisand created a furor with her characteristic nose did the 'nose-job' lose its attraction." Completely apart from its context—a complaint that had been stirred up about the Jews having too much influence in Washington—a formulation like that is offensive in *any* context when one reads it not in *MUT* but in a leading German daily. It simply displays a lack of sensitivity.

On the other hand, I agree with you: I too breathe a little easier when I see how the government has to take into consideration the more liberal portion of its clientele, that it has to direct itself toward what I have somewhat optimistically called fundamental liberalization. Today there are majorities in Germany that we don't have to be afraid of. At any rate our *juste-milieu* doesn't arouse the kind of anxiety one hears in every line of Max Horkheimer's [posthumously published] journals from the 1950s and 1960s.

But I don't feel cozy and settled. A *juste-milieu* can have clay feet too. What would a nonoppressive normality be like? It would be a normality that managed not to be apathetic toward the unbearable. Sensitivity to what

* An impassioned debate among German historians regarding the meaning of the Nazi past and the uses of anticommunism, which Habermas described as "a debate over the self-understanding of the Federal Republic." See Anson Rabinbach, "German Historians Debate the Nazi Past," *Dissent*, Spring 1988.

** Right-wing political leaders.

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society has produced in the form of suffering and injustice that *could be avoided* would be normal. In my contact with my children, and with younger people in general, I notice how my own responses have become dulled. Perhaps, and I say this as a university teacher, contact with younger generations is the most reassuring thing there is in our country. If distrust of one generation for the other and distrust within the same generation ever become unnecessary, we will be able to look into the future without getting worked up. □

dissent

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Evan McKenzie

MORNING IN PRIVATOPIA

From Plato's *Republic* to Sir Thomas More's *Utopia* to B. F. Skinner's *Walden Two* and beyond, many social theorists have tried to design, even to build, an ideal human community. It is a prospect that many view with ambivalence. As Louis Mumford wrote, "The word UTOPIA stands in common usage for the ultimate in human folly or human hope. . . ."

Recently, a new form of urban and suburban housing known as the "common interest development" (CID) has risen to prominence in most rapidly growing areas of America. CIDs include condominiums, community apartments, co-ops, and planned unit developments (PUDs) of detached, single-family housing. These types of housing have one thing in common: Residents own or exclusively occupy their own units, but they share ownership of the "common areas" used by all.

Although this seems an innocuous concept, CIDs may be taking urban and suburban America on a purposeful course toward a vision of utopia where the twin values of private property and private government reign—a sort of "privatopia," in which the residents are essentially citizens of a separate polity.

Some forty million Americans now live in common-interest housing developments where the residents privately support—and exclusively enjoy—a variety of services, ranging from police protection to swimming pools to local self-government, that were once the province of cities. The spread of CIDs could potentially accelerate the decline of cities, affect the political balance of power in urban and suburban America, and put more formerly public services into the private sector on a "pay-for-your-own" basis. It could also accustom many Americans to a form of local government free from constitutional limitations. In the words of Richard Louv, author of *America II*, "We have a generation of kids growing up in this country who don't know you should be able to paint your house any color you want."

Common property ownership requires organization, usually an incorporated "homeowners association," and a private residential government, usually in the form of a corporate board of directors. The board collects monthly dues and special assessments from all owners to maintain the development and enforces rules designed to protect property values. These elements—organization and self-government—distinguish CIDs from other housing developments.

There were only a few hundred CIDs in 1960. Today there are over 125,000, and collectively they rival—and may soon surpass—the fewer than 50,000 elected local governments in numbers, income, and potential political power. The Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) estimates that by 1990 the annual income of CIDs will top $20 billion. These bastions of the white middle class are competing with cities for residents, offering homogeneous population, physical security, stable housing values, local control, and freedom from exposure to the social ills of the cities.

In exchange for these material benefits, however, the residents subject themselves to government by their neighbors—a kind of government that is not restricted by the Constitution because it is private and, in the eyes of the law, no more capable of "state action" than the Kiwanis Club. Yet these private governments do much more than organize backyard barbecues. They are capable of regulating and restricting political, religious, and social activity. Perhaps most important, they have enormous economic and political resources that they are only beginning to tap.

The Rise of Privatopia

Even suburbia started as a utopian vision. Historian Robert Fishman, in *Bourgeois Utopias*, shows how modern suburbia was born in eighteenth-century England as a middle-class utopia and how it was exported to the United States in the nineteenth century. These first bourgeois utopias saw suburbia as a place where their most cherished values—the nuclear family, religious faith, private property, contact with nature—could be fully realized, free from the corrupting influence of the cities and the lower classes.

Common-interest housing had its genesis in the

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transformation of housing into a mass-produced commodity—the development—after World War II.

The CID revolution itself began in about 1960, when the federally assisted "New Town" movement spawned such heavily planned, privately governed, and eerily self-contained communities as Reston, Virginia; Columbia, Maryland; and Irvine, California. With populations of up to six hundred thousand, they were heirs to the European "Garden City" concept espoused by Ebenezer Howard in the late nineteenth century. The sponsors of these "instant cities," as Theodore Roszak called them in the *Nation* in 1967, included Gulf Oil, Humble Oil, Goodyear Tire and Rubber, Westinghouse, and General Electric.

However, in contrast to the European experience, the American national government pulled out of this planned housing partnership in the 1970s, which made city-sized developments too big and risky an undertaking for private industry. This led to smaller developments and promoted the takeover of housing construction by large corporations, including insurance companies, pension funds, large-scale joint ventures, and building corporations that went public and tapped the stock market for equity capital.

These large-scale developers fell in love with the common-interest ownership concept because it enabled them to satisfy consumer preferences for amenities such as swimming pools, golf courses, parks, private beaches, recreation rooms, security gates and guards, and so forth, which would be prohibitively expensive for individual owners.

Cities and counties are more likely to permit construction of a new development if it promises a level of self-sufficiency that will add property tax revenue without a concomitant burden on public services. Consequently, if the large corporate developer can equip the development with a new highway off-ramp, a private sewer system, a park, and a school building—things many cities just can't afford on their own anyway—local government authorities are more easily mollified.

Locke in a Condominium?

The millions of Americans who live in these places, including—and perhaps especially—those who govern them, are undergoing a subtle indoctrination process, courtesy of the developers who wrote the rules they live by. The community structure combines direct rule enforcement, subtle conformist pressures, and the rational self-interest in preserving property values into a powerful formula that all but guarantees obedience. People are led without feeling led, for the most part, and they do not resent anything except the most overt examples of oppression.

When the developer subdivides the property into individual lots, he sets up a system of restrictive covenants in all the deeds—colloquially called the "CC&Rs," short for covenants, conditions, and restrictions—that mutually bind all purchasers and require them to live by the dictates of the homeowners' association. Anyone who buys a unit is automatically subject to this regime, but it is considered a "voluntary association" by the law because nobody forced anyone to buy. This ignores the economic realities that force many people into this kind of housing against their will. In addition, this kind of logic turns social contract theory on its head. Instead of a group of individuals in a state of nature banding together and consenting to live by a set of rules of their choosing, we have the reverse: first the rules, then the houses, then the people.

CID residents are in a box, but they don't see it that way. After all, everybody else obeys the rules. All the lawns are mowed, all the cars are parked in the driveways after 8:00 p.m., all the houses are the same color, and all the dogs weigh less than thirty pounds. Rational self-interest supports this sort of conformity. A clean, well-kept development with no signs of human wear-and-tear will attract buyers, who see property values being protected.

If these informal pressures fail, formal procedures will pick up the slack. Paint your house a different color than everybody else's and see what happens. First, one of your neighbors, a representative of the architectural committee, politely asks you to repaint it in accordance with the CC&Rs. You refuse. Next, you receive a letter from the board of directors ordering you to repaint it. You ignore it. Then, you receive a notice that the association has assessed a fine of $50 per day until you repaint the house. You ignore that. A month later you receive legal documents informing you that the association is preparing to sell your house to pay the fine. If you ignore that, you may discover in short order that this is not just a neighborhood tiff—CIDs are suburbia with teeth.

Yet they defy definition. Do they amount to Locke's social contract reduced to writing, with community membership and voting based upon property ownership? Or, with their shared property interests, do they represent socialism-by-contract for the affluent? Are they libertarian "private protective associations," as in Robert Nozick's *Anarchy, State and Utopia*? What about the cultlike isolation some CIDs cultivate? Should we look at them as communes? Is there a communalist strain under all

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this privatization? Or do they represent the corporation of the home, with each family a shareholder?

Who Governs?

The exterior look and feel of these developments often echo America's mythical idyllic past and attempt to project at least the illusion of community and town meeting government. Yet the residents who run for places on the board of directors—unpaid positions—are often controlling, autocratic types who see their role as enforcing their way of life on everybody else. Their power is very real and substantial and often dwarfs their ability to exercise it. As a result, some odd political decisions emerge from privatopia. Here are some examples of CID private government in action across America, all reported in the press:

- In Ashland, Massachusetts, a Vietnam veteran was told that he could not fly the American flag on Flag Day. The board backed down only after he called the press and the story hit the front page.
- In Monroe, New Jersey, a homeowners' association took a married couple to court because the wife, at age forty-five, was three years younger than the association's age-forty-eight minimum for residency. The association won. The judge ordered the sixty-year-old husband to sell, rent the unit, or live without his wife.
- In Houston, Texas, a homeowners' association took a woman to court for keeping a dog in violation of her CID rules. The association won. She kept the dog anyway. The judge sent her to jail for contempt of court.
- In Fairbanks Ranch, an affluent CID in southern California, behind six locked gates there are forty-five private streets patrolled by private security officers who enforce a private speed limit. First-time speeders get a warning; the second offense brings a hearing before the board and a reprimand; a third offense means a $500 fine, and the car and driver are banned from the private streets for a month.

America—A House Divided?

It is hard to say—and maybe irrelevant, like all chicken-egg questions—whether this sort of internal behavior is the result of a particular kind of private political socialization or whether CIDs attract a large number of people who think a certain way. Whatever the reason, there are signs that homeowner associations are beginning to extend their influence outward. Privatopia may be coming into its own as a political pressure group with a distinct agenda revolving around the enhancement of property values and a kind of residential isolationism. Given their affluence, organization, connections, and potential for bloc voting, CIDs could advance their agenda quickly.

Many of Florida's CID residents are politically organized. They have become known in the press as the "Condo Commandos," and former President Jimmy Carter tapped their support.

Three thousand miles away is Indian Wells, California, a desert community made up primarily of CIDs, whose residents enjoy the state's highest per capita income behind their walls and gates. The city declared itself "blighted" in order to take advantage of a state law intended to permit truly afflicted communities to retain tax money for community redevelopment.

This might seem offensive enough, but there's more. The law required that 20 percent of the tax windfall be used to build low-income housing. Indian Wells took the tax money, used it to build a luxury golf course and attract several resorts catering to the super-rich, and then went to the state legislature for special legislation exempting it from the housing requirement so it could build the low-income housing somewhere else, outside of Indian Wells. The California legislature passed the bill, after receiving $400,000 in political campaign contributions from private developers who had more lucrative plans for the land. However, after the measure received bad press, the governor vetoed it.

This atrophied sense of social responsibility has led to a logical conclusion—the demand for special tax breaks. The Community Associations Institute (CAI) is a nationwide organization of CIDs. Recent newsletters and published articles by its current president have suggested that CID residents are paying a "double tax." That is, they pay property tax, which goes to support public services, but they also pay dues and assessments to maintain their own, sometimes duplicative, private services. They consider this unfair, and they want a tax deduction for all or part of their homeowner dues.

Since annual CID revenues are approaching equivalency with total local government income, this could potentially bankrupt many cities and counties. However, we can safely anticipate that some aspiring politician will make this proposal the centerpiece of a campaign and, in the right area, ascend to statewide office and try to implement it.

The framework for such campaigns is taking shape. Through the activities of CAI and other organizations, we are now seeing the emergence of a "CID vote." While the nonprofit homeowners' association is ordinarily not allowed to get involved in partisan politics, there is nothing to prevent a CID from organizing or belonging to a political action committee, and such CID PACs already exist.

It seems inescapable that this development will have major impact on the shape of state and local politics. CIDs, with their unique brand of internal

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politics, have the potential to exacerbate the real conflict that is developing in many metropolitan areas between urban centers and their surrounding suburbs. Unemployment, inequality, crime, drug abuse—these are all easily seen as city problems for which the CID resident has no responsibility—social, financial, political or otherwise—except the responsibility for escaping them. □

Nicolaus Mills

NUCLEAR CIVIL WAR

The land around the Fernald uranium processing plant in southwestern Ohio is rich enough to grow most anything. But for the plant's neighbors the standing joke is that pumpkins are the crop to raise: "They don't need a candle at Halloween." The joke reflects the bitterness people in this normally conservative part of Ohio feel over the radioactive waste exposure they have received from the plant. But the joke also reflects their willingness to fight a system that, as the Department of Energy's Joe LaGrone acknowledged, put production over everything. To the plant's neighbors, especially FRESH (Fernald Residents for Environmental Safety and Health), it was a source of pride when last year the Environmental Policy Institute announced that the government had spent more money on cleanup at Fernald than at any other site in the country.

From a distance nothing looks more benign than the thirty-eight-year-old Fernald Feed Materials Production Center. FMPC seems almost lost in the rolling Ohio countryside. Back in 1951, when the government paid nine local farmers $500,000 for the land, a U.S. Army Corps of Engineers general observed, "There are no cemeteries to relocate, no schools to be affected." That sense of peacefulness still prevails. There is nothing formidable about the low, flat buildings that make up most of FMPC. Even its water tower, which recently had its red and white checkerboard colors changed to blue and white, looks innocent. It is not surprising that local residents often rented land near FMPC for garden plots or that newcomers to the area thought FMPC produced pet food. You have to drive slowly to notice the yellow warning signs posted on FMPC's fences, and you have to know what you are looking for to pick out the leaking K-65 concrete silos that contain waste from the World War II Manhattan Project.

People here have, however, learned to look closely. Doris Clawson, who like her mother has had multiple cancer operations, has kept a list for the last twenty years of Fernald area residents who have died of cancer. Her list now totals fifty-seven. The Zinsers' story is just as horrifying. Two years after the Zinsers rented a garden plot near FMPC, both their sons were diagnosed as having cancer. When bones from their younger son's amputated leg were tested, doctors found ten times the amount of uranium in them that an adult could be expected to accumulate over a lifetime.

That FMPC should be responsible for such a toll on Fernald residents (in the absence of epidemiological studies the precise damage is impossible to assess) is hardly surprising. This fall the Ohio Environmental Protection Agency estimated that FMPC had released 298,000 pounds of uranium dust into the air since the plant started, deliberately discharged 167,000 more pounds of uranium waste into the Great Miami River, and has 12.7 million pounds of uranium waste stored in pits, many of which are leaking. These estimates are, if anything, conservative. The Department of Energy (DOE), which has continually had to revise its estimates upward, has put the FMPC uranium dust releases as high as 530,000 pounds, and a recent *Cincinnati Enquirer* story, which described FMPC as an "atomic age trash pile," painted an even more horrifying picture. It showed FMPC with 1,066,336,462 pounds of nuclear garbage, with special problems for 550,000 tons of sludge buried in six pits, 54,000 steel drums holding uranium waste, and 1,195 tons of the nation's entire stock of thorium (with a half-life of fourteen billion years).

What lies behind the Fernald scandal is a history that makes the much-publicized catastrophe of Three Mile Island pale by comparison. Ohio Congressman Thomas Luken is not guilty of hyperbole when he charges the government with "waging a kind of chemical warfare against the community of Fernald." Senior scientists at the Institute for Energy and Environmental Research point out that it is no accident that FMPC has become such a danger. No off-site air monitoring for radioactivity was done at FMPC until 1959, and the air monitoring system that was put in place in 1959 and expanded in 1972 was insufficient to detect the majority of uranium releases.

The most damning revelations about FMPC's history come, however, not from outside critics but from the government's own records and the testimony of FMPC plant managers. The picture they paint is of a plant that was, in the words of one Fernald manager, "barely" functional with regard to

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safety. Not only was funding for plant safety so inadequate that outdated equipment was constantly used, safety practices at FMPC were allowed to slide in order to keep production on schedule. Worst of all, government officials and plant managers kept these problems hidden from the public and often from each other. In 1958 Atomic Energy Commission (AEC) members knew that concrete storage tanks at FMPC had cracks. Rather than have the tanks replaced, however, they allowed the radioactive liquid in them to leak out until it fell below the crack line. In 1962 AEC officials were told that runoff from FMPC's wastepits could contaminate Fernald groundwater, but again they took no steps to correct the problem, choosing instead to ignore warnings. In 1981 the DOE knew that enriched uranium was seeping into the wells around Fernald, but only in 1985 did DOE officials warn residents of the danger to their health.

At a time when the four biggest nuclear weapons plants in the country have all been shut down, what has made Fernald such a headline event are, however, more than revelations of mismanagement and lying. Key is the manner in which the government has dealt with the revelations. In the past the government's official position has always been that it was doing its best to safeguard the health of anybody living around a nuclear plant. Typical is the following letter, written in 1983 by Ronald Cochran, director of DOE's Office of Nuclear Materials Production. "We can assure you that the safety and welfare of our employees at the site and our neighbors in the area surrounding the plant is given high priority in our operations," Cochran wrote a worried Fernald resident. "Emissions from the site are extensively monitored and are within limits established by DOE and other governmental organizations." But in the fall of 1988, in response to a $300 million class-action suit filed on behalf of 14,000 Fernald residents, the government suddenly changed its position. To avoid the liability it would ultimately have to assume if the suit against National Lead of Ohio (NLO), which managed FMPC until 1986, succeeded, the government took the position that it had willfully and consistently condoned NLO's violations of environmental law.

The government's position was based on its reading of the Supreme Court's June 1988 decision in the case of *Boyle v. United Technologies*. That case arose from the death of a Marine helicopter copilot, whose helicopter crashed off the Virginia coast. The copilots heirs, alleging defects in the helicopter's escape hatch, brought suit against United Technologies under Virginia tort law, but the court, in an expanded ruling of a doctrine known as "the military contractor defense," said United Technologies could not be held liable when it had done work according to government specifications.

In shouldering blame for damage done at FMPC, the government was seeking a similar catch-22 immunity. By insisting that it was responsible for the radioactive contamination done by National Lead of Ohio during its management of FMPC, it was hoping to exempt National Lead from having to indemnify anybody and in turn itself from having to reimburse National Lead. "It's like *A Tale of Two Cities,* except there's not a great deal of honor in pointing the finger," Stanley Chesley, the Cincinnati attorney leading the class-action suit against the government, has said of the DOE's Sydney Carton-like posturing.

Right now, the government's strategy seems to have backfired. On Feburary 13 a Federal District Court in Ohio ruled that the government-contractor defense did not apply to Fernald. The ruling reflects FMPC's tangled history. In the *Boyle* case United Technologies was excused from liability because it had followed government standards. In the case of Fernald the government's problem is that neither its agencies, the Atomic Energy Commission and the Department of Energy, nor National Lead of Ohio acted with enough consistency to establish which was the true villain. At times the government rewarded National Lead for meeting its responsibilities. At times it censured National Lead for unsatisfactory safety performance. At times National Lead warned the government of safety problems at FMPC. At times National Lead tried to conceal its problems, once even going so far as to paint contaminated surfaces the same color as the hazardous materials that had leaked onto them. At no time, moreover, did the AEC or DOE have a compelling legal reason to ask National Lead to violate the governmental safety regulations it was required by contract to obey.

The political backfire from the government's catch-22 strategy has produced even greater fallout. When FRESH began, it faced strong opposition. There was skepticism from the press in view of DOE assurances that everything was all right at FMPC. Fernald's Atomic Trades Labor Council, which in 1988 struck FMPC for three months in a dispute that centered on safety conditions, worried that if FRESH were successful its workers would lose their jobs. And local merchants, many of whom depended on sales generated by the $46.5-million payroll of FMPC's fifteen hundred workers, feared they would

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be forced out of business if the plant's operations were cut.

Now FRESH finds itself in a very different position. Its monthly meetings at the Venice Presbyterian Church, which rarely drew more than sixty, now draw two and three times that number, and instead of a skeptical Cincinnati press, FRESH finds local reporters vying for new Fernald material. The result is a pro-FRESH political environment. Ohio is Reagan-Bush territory, but on nuclear matters, it has become the model for what a state can do to fight nuclear contamination by a government facility.

In Washington Congressman Thomas Luken and Senator and former astronaut John Glenn have spearheaded the drive to get the government to spend more money on nuclear cleanup. Committees they serve on, particularly the Senate Subcommittee on Energy, Nuclear Proliferation, and Governmental Processes, have given the DOE some of its worst moments and been instrumental in eliciting acknowledgment of administrative wrongdoing from government officials once reluctant to speak. Just as important, within Ohio there has been an equally aggressive stance toward the DOE. Governor Richard Celeste has compared the nuclear waste at FMPC to a time bomb and declared, "If a terrorist had buried it there, there would be an extraordinary and prompt reaction." State attorney general Anthony Celebrezze, Jr. has been no less forceful. This December, as a result of suits filed in 1986 and 1987, Celebrezze forced the DOE to pay Ohio a $1-million settlement and agree that in the future the DOE would obey Ohio hazardous waste laws as well as meet state air and water standards.

At a time when the DOE's own estimates for cleaning up the nation's nuclear plants varies from $91 billion to $200 billion, Ohio's actions are of special significance. For the foreseeable future, citizen groups are the only politically reliable nuclear watchdogs. The federal government, already feeling pressed to meet its nuclear defense requirements, is in no rush to spend scarce tax dollars on the nuclear mess it has left behind. The DOE in particular seems to have learned nothing from 1988. In its long-awaited "2010 Report" on ways to manage America's nuclear-bomb industry through the year 2010, the DOE advocates spending just $52 billion to renovate and $29 billion to clean up the country's nuclear-bomb plants.

If there is anything the nuclear civil war in Ohio proves, however, it is that the scandal DOE would like to have disappear will not. Driving through the snowy Ohio countryside with members of FRESH in the days after Christmas, I was struck by how prepared they were for a long struggle. The money from the class-action suit, which some day may help with hospital bills or declining land values, was a subject that rarely came up. What did come up was the belief that here was a fight from which no retreat was possible. The cancer FMPC had produced and the fears it had caused (of having a deformed child in the case of FRESH spokeswoman Lisa Crawford) could not be forgotten. But merely remembering them was not enough either. They had to be stopped so that another generation would not grow up with another FMPC. "What good does it do to protect ourselves from the Soviets by building nuclear weapons, if we poison ourselves in the process?" Senator Glenn would ask in the wake of government revelations about FMPC. In Fernald it is a question that has been asked and answered quietly in living room after living room without anybody wondering who thought of it first. □

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Robert A. Athearn

THE CONSTITUTION, TASTE, AND "VIOLENCE OF FACTIONS"

James Madison, who understood democracy better than most then or since, would have been perplexed by Sanford Levinson's piece in the summer issue that treated interpretations of the Constitution as mere matters of "taste." Madison was quite sure what he was about in proposing the Constitution as an *answer* to such political uncertainty. He very likely would have seen this and the many other discussions of what the Constitution is all about as evidence of a failure to comprehend what he expected it to do. The currently prevalent notion of democracy as an arena for the unconstrained combat of a plurality of factional interests was precisely what he hoped the Constitution would prevent, for the thrust of his conception of that document was that it would *control* what he called "the violence of factions" and so assure what Alexander Hamilton, in *Federalist 80,* called "the inviolable maintenance of that equality of privileges and immunities to which the citizens of the union will be entitled." Madison, in *Federalist 10,* recognizes that the existence of a plurality of factions is unavoidable but expected that a "well constructed union," for which the Constitution was to provide what today might be called a "hegemonic frame," would "break and control the violence of factions." And I suspect, further, that he would have been puzzled that anyone would question the ethical essence of the document, without which there would be no need of a Constitution at all.

In Levinson's discussion, the assumption seems to be that democracy is, indeed, such an arena for the more or less unconstrained competition of diverse factions; the plurality of value-holding groups is taken for granted. But such a definition lacks an essential ingredient. Fred Siegel, in his commentary, comes close to naming it but doesn't quite make it. Lacking that ingredient, the definition is of anarchy, which democracy definitely is not and cannot be if it is to remain a democracy. It certainly doesn't allow place to Madison's "well constructed union."

To clarify this issue by uncovering that missing ingredient, consider, by way of example, the French *Declaration of the Rights of Man and of the Citizen* of 1789. In the translation I have at hand, its crucial paragraph begins with the statement that "Political liberty consists in the power of doing *whatever does not injure another.*" The italics are mine, because the essential ingredient is in that phrase. This is the constraint a democratic polity would place on individual and factional behavior, on the exercise of personal autonomy. It is the moral factor that distinguishes anarchy, defined by the first part of that statement alone, from the democracy defined by the whole. In its next sentence, the Declaration says, "The exercise of the natural rights of every man has no other limits than those which are necessary to secure to every other man the free exercise of the same rights." The exercise of personal autonomy, alone or in concert with others as a faction, has its natural moral constraint in the right of every other person to the same exercise. This is the moral principle that defines democracy and distinguishes it not only from anarchy but from the tyranny to which, without that restraint, anarchy opens the door. Siegel's approach to this, as I see it, is in these words: "The practical effect of insisting on absolute moral autonomy is to destroy community sentiment by putting individual behavior beyond not only *the reach of government,* but of social censure as well." Again, the italics are mine, for I believe it was Madison's intention that the Constitution would put individual behavior and factional behavior *within* the reach of government.

The concluding phrase of the Declaration's paragraph, continuing the last one quoted above, reads, "and these are determined only by the law." My impression is that Madison, Hamilton, and others among the framers would agree that the function of the Constitution was to provide that "law." Hamilton, in the above quotation from *Federalist 80,* certainly seems to imply that this is so.

That the entitlement he mentions has been so long denied to so many of the citizens of the union may have something to do with the fact that the First

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Amendment of the "Bill of Rights" shows that its authors feared an establishment of religion, a theocracy, more than any other, in the light of their experience with the establishment of the English church, but failed to recognize the greater likelihood of an establishment of wealth, a plutocracy, which now to so great an extent dominates the life of the nation today and imposes its values on the whole. Under its influence, we have seen a gradual regression toward the "pure democracy" the well-documented evils of which the Constitution, as Madison conceived it, was meant to avoid. We now judge the health of the nation by its Gross National Product rather than by the well-being of all its citizens which would be the chief concern of a genuinely democratic polity. These two counts alone, among many others, indicate that the nation is much more a plutocracy than it is a democracy. The wolf has eaten the sheep and clothed itself in the sheep's skin.

Madison warned that persons with sinister intent might, "by intrigue, by corruption or by other means"—"other means" would include the institution of a factional establishment—"first obtain the suffrages, and then betray the interests of the people." Later in his life, with what must have been for him a melancholy prescience, he said,

> We are free today substantially but the day will come when our Republic will be an impossibility. It will be an impossibility because wealth will be concentrated in the hands of a few. A Republic cannot stand upon bayonets, and when the day comes, when the wealth of the nation will be in the hands of a few, then we must rely upon the wisdom of the best elements in the country to readjust the laws of the nation to the changed condition.

This is a slender reed upon which to rely; the attention of "the best elements" has for the most part been successfully diverted to other concerns.

That faction most likely to win the immunity and privileges of an Establishment, and so to escape the constraint of the democratic law, is the one which controls to a sufficient degree the access of the citizens to the means for their subsistence, and so is able, in effect, to hold the whole nation hostage to its interest and to block out any significant effort to bring it under that constraint. As Hamilton wrote, "control of a man's subsistence is control over his will." Further, the idea that democracy is an arena for the unconstrained competition of a plurality of factions will find favor with the faction that achieves its dominance in that competition. It will do what it can to win the general acceptance of that notion. By its powers, including its control over the opinion-manipulating media, it will seek to justify the continued withholding of democratic constraint by claiming that Adam Smith's "invisible hand" provides a sufficient constraint and makes the constraint of the law redundant, or even harmful, and will manage to persuade a sufficient portion of the population that this is indeed the case, that giving greed—the defining plutocratic value—its head would serve the pubic's well-being as well or better than Constitutional constraint. The upshot, of course, since the "invisible hand" is an appendage of the god Mammon, has been to enable "those who live by profit" to enrich themselves at the expense of the rest, as Smith warned that they might.

That this has happened, that in the process "the inviolable maintenance of that equality of privileges and immunities to which the citizens of the union will be entitled," which the Constitution was to assure, has been violated, testifies to the failure of the judiciary to protect them from this disfranchisement. "Governments," says Whitehead, "are best classified by considering who are the 'somebodies' they are in fact endeavoring to satisfy." With wealth concentrated in the hands of a few, and many living in or near poverty, the United States cannot be rationally classified as a democracy. Madison's "representative Republic" has become "an impossibility."

Beyond all these considerations, however, which some might not be willing to agree to, is the elemental idea, of which I am sure Madison was aware, that *any* human behavior intended to accomplish a certain end must be disciplined—constrained (*pace* Thomas Sowell)—to do only those things that are conducive to that accomplishment and to refrain from doing those things that are not. If the goal of your present behavior is to drive a nail, you are constrained to use a hammer, not a sponge. If the goal of government is the well-being of all its people, neither the anarchy of a factional plurality nor a manipulable "pure democracy," nor a theocratic or plutocratic value-hegemony can assure that well-being. Only that polity can do so which is committed to that goal and provides the necessary discipline, that which the Constitution, as Madison conceived it, was to provide, as the "hammer" for driving that "nail." The function of the judicial branch of government is to see that it remains the appropriate instrument for that goal.

In *Federalist 78,* Hamilton, discussing the role of the judiciary under the proposed Constitution, wrote, "The complete independence of the courts of justice is peculiarly essential in a limited constitution." Such a constitution limits behavior to assure that the equality of privileges and immunities to which the citizens are

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entitled remains "inviolable." It is this constitution to which the judiciary ought to be solely accountable.

Abraham Lincoln said it well: "As I would not be a slave, so I would not be a master. This expresses my idea of democracy. Whatever differs from this, to the extent of the difference, is no democracy." When any person or faction exercises autonomy in a way that interfaces with the equal right of another to do the same, the effect is a master-slave relation with that other. Insofar as exemptions are allowed to the democratic rule constraining the exercise of autonomy, there is *no* democracy. What is especially to be noted, however, is that the *only* constriant that rule places on that exercise is the requirement that it must not affect the well-being of another adversely, as the law assuring justice determines. The judiciary is properly the agent of that law.

Sanford Levinson Replies

I regret very much that the editors changed my original title, which was "Accounting for Tastes in Constitutional Interpretation," *not* "Clashes of Taste in Constitutional Interpretation." The point of the initial title, and of the "accounting" metaphors that run throughout the article, is precisely to suggest that an analyst must present a rationale—an accounting—for any given interpretation. Differences in interpretive approaches are more than a rational clash of taste—do you prefer chocolate to vanilla constitutional law?—but rather a clash of accounting systems. The question raised by the article concerns the existence of any "generally accepted principles of accounting" that can resolve these clashes. I obviously think not.

Athearn presents an attractive theory of the Constitution, but it is clearly not the only theory that could be derived from study of the late-eighteenth-century background of the Constitution. In particular, there is reason to believe that government by plutocracy was well within the vision of some of the founders, though of course they would not have used the term "plutocrat." But many founders viewed the Constitution's protection of private property and enhancement of the role of the propertied classes as desirable features of the Constitution. Those with property were seen at the very same instant as those possessing the requisite social virtue to prevent the disintegration of the American republic into a mere democracy, where the rabble might potentially turn the world upside down. (Athearn indicates his own rejection of "pure democracy" in favor of a polity that is adequately disciplined.)

There was no consensus in 1787 about the nature of good government; There is none now. To believe that purported agreement around the proposition "control faction" provides much guidance is fanciful, for one must go on to develop a general theory by which one successfully recognizes a "faction." No such theory has ever proved generally persuasive.

Sociopolitical factors (like a president's success in appointing ideologically agreeable judges) may lead to the temporary supremacy of one particular account during a particular era, but there has never been, nor do I think there ever will be, a cessation of the struggle between contending systems of accounting. □

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Luther P. Carpenter

WHAT SHOULD WE BE TEACHING?

The debate over what to teach—"the canon", "Great Books," core curriculum, Western civilization versus world civilization, the sins of Stanford, and so on—is one the least edifying debates of recent times. The problem is that it's not a debate at all. Instead, everybody is feverishly waving book lists. What makes it even less edifying is that everyone brandishes book lists for different courses. Unfortunately, Irving Howe's and David Bromwich's comments in *Dissent* (Fall 1988) didn't advance the debate. They only reacted within the framework set up by the academic conservatives who created the messy fight in the first place. The debate has been so badly framed that a wise person would stay out of it, but that's impossible for educators and for citizens: Our profession and our mental health are at stake.

The first step to arguing clearly and fairly is to say what students and courses we're talking about: high school or college, lit courses or humanities or introductory history. A lot of the static will disappear if we do this. I teach history and will talk in terms of an introductory college history course; some of my stands may not apply to every situation, while others may provoke discussion. The students I have in mind are freshmen in mass universities. Today's mass students are not the college students of the 1950s. They have a broader range of skills and backgrounds. Over half of my students work, part time or full time. Most need a lot of attention to skills; we cannot assume that they will refine their skills as they do the work. Most of my students are business majors who will take only a few liberal arts courses. I cannot assume that my job is to provide "background" for other courses; I may well be teaching them the only history they'll get. They approach their liberal arts courses very warily. They are not convinced that dead philosophers really changed the world. They are afraid of argument, of looking bad before their peers and the teacher; they have to be convinced that argument is a way of testing truth. They want to find their way into a very complicated and manipulative society. They are inevitably present-minded—and it's worth reminding ourselves that today's eighteen-year-old is as far from the industrial revolution, in terms of the volume of historical experience, as I was from the Renaissance in 1958. Nor should we assume that these students know modern history and society so that they can connect older histories and literature to the present. I do not mean to put them down for lacking "background"; I think that's unavoidable.

These are the vast majority of eighteen-year-old college students. They must be taken seriously or we can't work with them. If one doesn't take them seriously, the debate degenerates into student-bashing. We can't just say that they should get what students in the elite colleges get, because the elite get "the best." That argument is an unnecessary distraction. It's not automatically true. To argue that it's true, one has to have an independent standard of "the best," which is the real issue. There is a more plausible social dimension to this argument: Since the elite will be hiring the graduates of mass universities, shouldn't the mass study what the elite studied, to avoid looking foolish and ignorant? Maybe—but the advantage that graduates of the elite universities have is shared connections more than shared curricula.

I think every teacher, on every level, has to face the issue of standards for deciding what to teach. The real difficulty in the debate is that there are *no* universally accepted standards for deciding that something is part of the canon. Western culture is in disarray. The Victorian synthesis broke down long ago; anti-Victorianism has spent its force; "modernism" per se has ceased to inspire many people. That's why the debate has broken out in this time and place. This absence of a canon scares intellectuals and political elites. Many participants in the debate want to use their reading lists to impose their particular rules of behavior on the society. I don't think this strategy can work: A reading list can't unify our culture, it's just not strong enough. And a reading list doesn't dictate how the great work is to be read. I read Plato's *Republic;* that didn't make me crave a philosopher-king. So the issue isn't so much what to teach as what our purposes are in assigning something; our purposes should determine our choices.

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If a reading list can't solve our intellectual disarray overnight, then I would suggest that we shift our focus to the disarray itself and derive our purposes from it. What are we confused about? I see two huge questions for myself and my students: (1) How may a person live decently in our society? and (2) What's the modern world really made of? Of course I and my students want to hide from these questions, but we can't. The first question is the issue of individualism, hedonism, the "American Dream": What are my needs? Should I set any limits to what I want and to what I will do to get ahead? How can I and my students make our identities out of what our histories and cultures provide, race and gender and class and codes? The second question leads me immediately to capitalism and democracy, what they mean and how they affect us. It leads to capitalism as having a history, as passing through a series of stages resulting in late industrial or postindustrial or welfare capitalism, not just pure competition taught as something eternal. And it leads to democracy and its travails—the Constitution, which is the closest thing to a shared standard in the United States, but which is largely unknown; the uses and disuses of nationhood; the conflicts among rights; the friction between self-government and a democratic social order and individualism.

I'm not going to derive a reading list from these questions, but I will suggest some orientations. It follows that the oldest works are not the most important. Most classical philosophers were hostile to democracy and to working people; it makes sense to test oneself against some of them, but not to give them the bulk of the curriculum. And even if they were the originators of our culture, they didn't determine what it has become; they connect very indirectly with the things we need to explain. "Great Books" lists seem to always leave out the twentieth century, the disasters of nazism and the Great Depression, the reconstruction of Western industrial society after the war. These topics are important, not because they're closest to us, but because they connect to my main questions. The Great Depression and the Nazis both imperiled any conceivable way of living decently. They are diseases that Western industrial nations are vulnerable to—thus they connect to my second question. Western industrial societies had to reconstruct themselves after the war to prevent further depressions and to prevent a new fascism; we're still living in the decaying results of that postwar synthesis. I agree with Howe and Bromwich that it is desirable to give students the experience of other cultures and to develop empathy—but that doesn't mean that one has to travel to classical Greece or the Middle Ages; nineteenth-century London or Paris in the French Revolution is already a different world. Second, "Great Books" approaches to history or Western civilization are disembodied; social history needs to be added, to be able to argue that ideas do affect living. Third, adding works by women and non-Europeans can matter, but isn't the real issue. Western industrial society has overwhelmed the world; in turn, the overwhelmed have tried to make it respond to them, that is, to us. It's important to get this in, to talk about the experiences of women and "minorities" and Third World peoples and workers; some works by members of these groups will help, others will not. Once again, what matters is our questions, which can't be decided by waving reading lists.

These questions aren't anything new. I'm sure that other teachers are using them. I know that many teachers and administrators reject them—but I have been unable to get those who reject them to tell me their questions rather than their reading lists. I could be persuaded to change my questions and my reading lists; what I crave is a real debate, framed in terms of our purposes and students' needs. □

Be Careful What You Read!

In the *Hyatt Magazine,* Fall/Winter 1988, there appears the following by Lois Wyse, head of Wyse Advertising and "at last count the author of 46 books," titles unspecified:

> Most people on the corporate jet take paperwork with them. If, however, you decide to take supplemental reading material, make sure that your airplane reading is something more substantial than Jackie Collins's latest novel. It is not that reading Jackie Collins is below corporate taste; it just makes people wonder how deep you really are. Safest books for company plane travel: anything by Peter Drucker or Alvin Toffler; their books will prompt comment and conversation from fellow travelers. Do not take a book by Irving Howe or Saul Bellow; they smack of literary pretension, and only a few corporate executives can tolerate the literary mind.

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Jeremy Larner

VIOLENCE FOR FUN & PROFIT

I wonder how we incorporate the images we receive through the media. Do we take them as fact, believe what we see? Or if not, how do we use what we don't literally believe? The question is raised in new forms by recent cultural products.

In 1964 near Philadelphia, Mississippi, Michael Schwerner, Andrew Goodman, and James Chaney, three young civil rights workers, two whites and a black, canvassing in behalf of "Freedom Summer," were killed by sheriff's deputies, abetted by the sheriff himself. Some of the killers were convicted, not of murder in state courts, but of obstructing civil rights in federal courts. The prison terms were light and the triumph of justice minimal—yet what went on in the South that summer was part of a nonviolent movement, led by brave and assertive Southern blacks, that within a few years succeeded in integrating schools and public facilities, registering black voters and electing black officials, enforcing old laws and enacting new ones. Though the civil rights movement did not eradicate all the consequences of slavery and racism, it changed the position of black people in American society.

Of course racial crimes and discrimination continued, giving rise to the argument that black people would be better served by a violent movement. In the Spring 1965 *Dissent,* I described how Malcolm X taunted teenage black civil rights workers from McComb, Mississippi, then visiting New York. They had given up their manhood, he said, by the way they responded to violence. The argument had a telling effect psychologically, though it proved to have no political application in this country—any more than Malcolm X was about to lead a guerrilla war in Mississippi. Violence, as Rap Brown once said, is as American as cherry pie. A public man is diminished unless he can establish that he won't back off from violence—a message that Michael Dukakis, for one, failed to get across. The odor of violence is the commercial additive used to sell our politicians, our foreign policy, our media heroes, and our culture products. Now, in *Mississippi Burning,* the overplay of vigilante violence falsifies the history of the struggle in the South.

For in this revised version of the Philadelphia story, there is no movement for change working in Mississippi—only a battle between the Ku Klux Klan and the FBI. Never mind that J. Edgar Hoover was more interested in proving Martin Luther King a communist than in enforcing civil rights law—that FBI agents stood around making notes while demonstrators were brutalized in Birmingham, Selma, and elsewhere—that the Kennedys consistently sent federal marshals instead of the FBI to protect possible victims at key moments: no, in the film history, it's the FBI defending the rights of American citizens, while blacks pray, sing and run. The focus of the story is not the battle to achieve rights, but a fatuous running argument between a priggish FBI chief (Willem Dafoe) who wants to stick to the letter of the law, and a down-home ex-sheriff agent (Gene Hackman) who wants to fight fire with fire. Hackman, an always endearing tough guy, has the winning twinkle in his eye and the better part. He gets to sweet-talk a deputy's wife, grab a bad guy by the testicles, and send out for a special black agent who threatens to cut off the mayor's scrotum. Never mind that there were no black agents in the field at the time . . . or that in real life it was reward money that got the crucial testimony. In *Mississippi Burning,* the skills of director Alan Parker and production designers Philip Harrison and Geoffrey Kirkland—who deftly recreate the shabby, homey feel of a run-down Southern small town—go to the service of one more movie where might makes right.

Why is history revised this way? Because Hollywood believes not enough people, both here and abroad, will pay to see a movie about suffering and politics, but the upright cop/brash cop fighting buddies formula can be sold in any bottle. The secret glory of such movies is the violence itself: the thrill of genial Gene Hackman suddenly grabbing the redneck murderer's balls; the colorful blossoms of

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fire as one Negro church or house is torched every five minutes throughout the picture.

So I wonder what a young person seeing this movie thinks about the civil rights movement—say, a young black person, perhaps from a neighborhood where drug runners do drive-by killings with NRA-sanctioned automatic weapons? Maybe my hypothetical young viewer would gather that a kind of war was fought in the South, where the bad guys lit torches, the good guys grabbed groins, and the black people hid. No wonder *Mississippi Burning* draws anger from black audiences; they rightly do not like to see their counterparts portrayed as trembling on the sidelines—and many of the younger ones can't imagine not firing back. And through what cultural medium in our country would a young person learn the principles, the methods—or the courage—of Martin Luther King and all those who put their lives on the line for freedom?

I wonder, too, what millions of teens and subteens dream about when they see the highly creative videos of Michael Jackson? Here is a slender young man with a beautiful high-pitched voice and a face that is reputed to have been whitened and feminized. In his videos he is in constant danger—from bullies, gangsters or fans. He escapes by exploding into brilliant dancing, transforming mobs from thugs into chorus-boys, with himself as the outsider-turned-leader who dances through a thousand tough-guy poses and choreographed motions of jabbing, kicking, and slashing. Even his choice of filming sacrifices the sight of Jackson's marvelous footwork for the stylized gesture or the atmosphere of the almost-out-of-control mob.

Jackson's physical being seems to me an emblem of every sort of adolescent vulnerability. One can add to that the exposure of the star, who both portrays and becomes a target for the violence of his audience. Jackson sings, dances, and mugs his way through, because—on screen, at least—he's a magic person. But he makes his point in an environment of constant menace—perhaps the same inner landscape his viewers, too, hope to transcend.

We have to wonder about the outer environment from which this fantasy draws its power. While urban violence and *anomie* grow more extreme, politicians moralize and Michael Jackson creates the excitement of imaginary challenges and escapes.

One movie that transcends nothing is *Talk Radio,* to me the bravest, most controlled and disturbing of Oliver Stone's films, but for most reviewers, too tough a pill to swallow. The hero (and apparently main writer) of *Talk Radio,* is Eric Bogosian, playing a demented late-night radio host who can't hang up, can't stop talking, can't keep from trying to argue the haters and criminals of the world into submission. From a tower in Dallas, he summons loose Nazis, rapists, and drug heads out from under the rocks and gives them no quarter. But he's worse: going much too far, he accepts no praise, love or success, compulsively digging to destroy every belief or excuse he or anyone else might offer for happiness in a world as hopelessly corrupt as he can't help seeing and proving it is.

The irony of the movie is that Dallas radio listeners love our hero, or love to hate him. Despite or because of his own efforts, he too is a star, a marketable commodity, about to move into a national hookup, whose increasing notoriety creates in himself feelings of self-disgust and powerlessness. And he's right: He is powerless to modify the voices he evokes from the night around him, or the commercial powers that seek to exploit his substanceless fame.

This is a jarring picture, like one of the toughest monologues of Lenny Bruce, uncompromisingly and brilliantly filmed and acted, offering the viewer no palliatives, nothing like the "letter to Grandma" voice-over which partly vitiated Stone's *Platoon.* "I tell you what you are," says the radio host. "I have to, I have no choice."

Much that Bogosian says about life and thought in America is too unremittingly cruel to be true, yet he's a softy at heart. "Hit me," he says—he wants everyone to be heard, and he thinks then he will have nothing to fear. He's wrong about that, too. But the movie itself has an ear that hears more than the voice of its star. There is a sensibility at work tuned in to the desperation and vulgarity of the lonely American night caller. The talk-show host is a Christ-figure, like Nathanael West's Miss Lonelyhearts: He soaks up the hatred around him, and is crucified for it. As with West, there is no purgation. One leaves the theatre satisfied by the emotional logic but unstrung by the content.

The movies and videos I have discussed here evoke a world of false extremes and violent glamour that is hard to feel at home in. Where can one find some kind of human story-telling that does not involve physical or spiritual maiming?

One answer for this viewer is the BBC serial, *The Singing Detective,* written by Dennis Potter. I am grateful for its success on public television, which brought about a repeat showing this year. Paradoxi-

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cally, the hero of the story is another hateful man, a failed detective writer in the hospital with a maddening disease. Through most of the six-hour story he cannot move or write. The episodes intertwine his memories of a wrenching childhood during World War II; his fevered hallucinations of a dance of death going on around him; his real life in the hospital, where death and pain and therapy and a nasty wife intrude; and a detective story he writes in his head, where the betrayal and fear that have overwhelmed his life are—just barely—transformed into a scary, creepy, mock-sentimental thriller.

This is a lot to think about—and too much to describe and reconstruct here. The writer (named Philip Marlow) is a man who, like the talk-show host, pulls no punches in cutting down hypocrisy. The difference is that he is somehow lovable. His life, his wit, and his spirit are large. There is room amid bitter struggles and suffering for touches of kindness and fellow-feeling, the occasional notion that there but for the grace of God go I, memories of warmth and fleeting decency among the nightmares. There is the irony of true sentiment that can only be expressed in mocking tirades and sentimental song. There is an embarrassment of rich imagination. And when there is violence, the violence is stupid and awful, from the careless word to the wounded child to the idiotic murders of politics and fiction. Violence is not fun, revenge is not glorious, death is not a special effect.

Violence indeed is not the subject of *The Singing Detective*, neither latent nor overt. The subject is the torment of the human soul, the pain with which consciousness seeks to redeem itself.

That subject may not make big box-office, or send celebrities to the edge of the cardboard cliff where they stand above us, but let us trust it is a subject that will not die. □

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Robert Greenstein

NEW THINKING ABOUT POVERTY

POOR SUPPORT: POVERTY IN THE AMERICAN FAMILY, by David T. Ellwood. New York: Basic Books, 1988. 271 pp. $19.95.

When Charles Murray's attack on the welfare system, *Losing Ground,* was published in 1984, it drew a great deal of attention. With the conservative Manhattan Institute bankrolling an artful public relations campaign, Murray and his ideas were soon being widely discussed on television, in newspapers and magazines, and in policy circles. The fact that there was little or no empirical evidence to support much of Murray's argument (and a substantial body of evidence to refute it), and that much of the data Murray cited in support of his case was badly misread or misused, did not seem to matter.

David Ellwood's *Poor Support: Poverty in the American Family* has not attracted the attention that *Losing Ground* did. No policy institute or think tank has put up large sums to promote the book. Nor does its message fit neatly into a twenty-second sound bite, unlike Murray's argument that social welfare programs have done more harm than good and ought to be abolished.

Yet Ellwood's volume is what Murray's failed to be. It is an incisive, often brilliant, analysis that remains scrupulously faithful to the data and research evidence in the field. More important, it breaks new ground in fashioning a set of public policies that could substantially improve the lot of many poor families—and that may, at least in part, be politically achievable.

An economist and professor at Harvard's Kennedy School of Government, Ellwood has been known in academic circles for several years as one of the nation's foremost researchers on poverty issues. *Poor Support* both synthesizes the findings from his earlier work and moves beyond it.

Ellwood's earlier work is reflected in sections of the book that examine the claims of Murray and other conservatives who argue that welfare has only made things worse and has fostered increases in the number of single-parent families and out-of-wedlock births. Ellwood finds little basis for these claims. In a devastating critique of the Murray thesis, he finds that from 1972 to 1984, the number of children in female-headed families grew by three million while the number of children receiving welfare benefits (i.e., benefits under the Aid to Families with Dependent Children program) *declined* by more than half a million. "How on earth can AFDC be the cause of the growth in children in single-parent families when fewer and fewer children are getting benefits?" he asks. "If AFDC was [influencing] women to become single parents, the number of recipients would have grown along with the number of single parents. But . . . it fell." He explains that this pattern holds for black as well as white children. The number of black children in female-headed families grew by more than 25 percent between 1972 and 1984, while the number on AFDC fell by 15 percent.

Noting that welfare benefits vary widely among states, Ellwood also observes that if welfare had caused more single-parent families to form, rates of single-parent family formation would be greatest in states where benefits are highest. They aren't.

In effect, Ellwood tells us, we have been conducting a national experiment in which benefits are allowed to vary widely by state and in which the purchasing power of benefits in most states has been reduced sharply in recent years. (Benefits in the typical—or median—state were 35 percent lower in 1988 than in 1970, after adjusting for inflation.) The experiment has demonstrated that lower welfare benefits do *not* materially affect the formation of single-parent families or out-of-wedlock births, Ellwood reports. On the contrary, the main effect of lower welfare benefits is simply to make poor families poorer.

Although *Poor Support* was written before the new federal welfare reform law was enacted in October 1988, the book also offers an appraisal of the type of welfare-to-work programs that form the centerpiece of the new law. Ellwood explains that the impact of welfare-to-work programs is small. (These programs have been found to increase employment rates among welfare recipients by only about three to eight percentage points.) While these

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programs look like "decent investments," he cautions that no careful evaluation has found them to make more than a "tiny dent" in moving recipients from welfare to employment. Moreover, "there is not a shred of evidence to justify the claim that imposed work changes attitudes and expectations for the better."

So far, Ellwood's stance—defense of welfare benefits and skepticism about welfare-to-work programs—is compatible with that of traditional liberal welfare reformers whose principal goals have been to raise welfare benefits, extend coverage, and make work programs voluntary rather than mandatory. Yet this is far from where Ellwood comes out.

Poor Support argues persuasively that we are unlikely ever to achieve "humane welfare" in this country. Public attitudes toward welfare will not allow it. Moreover, Ellwood maintains, while welfare does not appear to deepen such social problems as child poverty, single parent families, and joblessness among young minority men, neither does it offer much of a solution to these problems. It fails to provide poor families a route to escape from poverty in a manner that helps them achieve some measure of autonomy and control over their lives. Furthermore, reliance on welfare is demeaning, stigmatizing, and isolating. Our goal should not be to reform welfare, Ellwood argues, but to replace it.

In lieu of welfare benefits, Ellwood proposes a series of "non-welfare" supports. The most promising are his proposals to "make work pay" (and thereby assist low-income working families) and to establish a uniform child-support assurance system.

Half of all poor children in the U.S. live in two-parent families. Accordingly, *Poor Support* focuses on poor two-parent families as well as on single-parent families.

As Ellwood notes, nearly half of these poor two-parent families include a full-time worker. The principal cause of their poverty thus is clear: low wages. Hence, Ellwood proposes establishing a national standard or goal: *If a parent works full-time year-round, the family should not have to live in poverty*. Unlike calls to raise welfare benefits to the poverty line, this goal should be acceptable across the political spectrum. Even the ultraconservative Heritage Foundation has been espousing it of late.

To achieve the goal, Ellwood advocates three basic steps: raising the minimum wage, expanding the earned income tax credit, and making health-care coverage and child-care support available to all of the working poor.

Throughout most of the 1960s and 1970s, full-time year-round work at the minimum wage raised a family of three slightly above the poverty line. Today, after eight years without a minimum wage increase, full-time year-round work at the minimum wage leaves a family of three some $2,900 below the poverty line. Restoring the minimum wage to its historic level would lift three-person families with a full-time worker out of poverty.

Larger families with children could also be removed from poverty if the federal earned income tax credit (EITC) were adjusted for the number of children in a family. The EITC is a credit for which working families with at least one child and income below about $19,000 now qualify. It is a "refundable" credit, meaning that if the credit for which a family qualifies exceeds the family's income tax liability, the family receives a check from the IRS for the difference. (Thus, if a family has income too low to owe federal income tax but qualifies for a $700 earned income tax credit, the IRS sends the family a check for $700.) In 1989, most families with earnings between about $5,000 and $12,000 qualify for a credit of at least $700; the maximum credit is $910.

Currently, the size of a family's credit is based solely on the family's income level. Ellwood calls for expanding the credit substantially, principally by increasing it as family size rises. After all, a family's needs increase as family size grows, and both the poverty line and welfare benefits increase with family size. Wages, however, do not. The result is that large working families with several children are more likely to be poor than smaller families are. There is thus a need for a wage supplement for poor families that is geared to family size—precisely what Ellwood's proposed EITC would be.

Ellwood's proposal to adjust the credit by family size is not novel. With the EITC widely regarded as "pro-work" (only working families are eligible) and "pro-family" (only families that live with and support a child are eligible), the notion of adjusting the EITC by family size now has nearly as much support on the right as on the left.

What Ellwood adds, however, is an analysis showing that only a *combination* of a minimum wage increase and a large boost in the EITC can achieve the goal of lifting families with a full-time worker out of poverty. Those who call for an EITC increase *instead of* a minimum wage hike, such as the editorial writers at the *New York Times*, would do well to examine this part of the book.

Recognizing that, even with these steps, working families could still remain poor if they had to incur large health-care or child-care bills, Ellwood also recommends reform in those areas. He calls for universal health-care coverage (although he does not take a strong position on how best to provide or

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finance it, a matter largely beyond the scope of his book). He also proposes making the existing federal child-care tax credit into a refundable credit. Since the credit currently is *not* refundable, working families too poor to owe federal income tax receive no child-care subsidy through the credit while many affluent families do. Making the credit refundable would extend these subsidies to lower income families (although it would not do much to ensure that child care of adequate quality is available to low-income families).

Under Ellwood's proposals, full-time work would thus provide a route out of poverty. This would prove highly beneficial to poor two-parent families. Yet for single parents, full-time work often is not an option.

Ellwood addresses this matter squarely, arguing that society should not expect full-time work of single mothers. Those pushing for tougher work requirements in public assistance programs commonly state that since most mothers who are not on welfare now work outside the home, welfare mothers should too. But Ellwood shows that *full-time* work by mothers not on welfare is far from the norm: in 1984, only 27 percent of all married women living in families with children worked full-time year-round. If, Ellwood asks, fewer than one in three mothers works full-time when there is a spouse to share household and child-rearing burdens, how can we expect or require full-time work by a single mother who has to shoulder these burdens alone?

Accordingly, he proposes establishing a different standard for single mothers: If a single mother works at least *half*-time, she and her family should be assured they will not be poor.

Raising the minimum wage and enlarging the earned income credit would help boost these mothers' incomes, of course. Yet a mother who works half-time at or near the minimum wage will still be far below the poverty line. Ellwood would fill this gap without provision of welfare benefits. Instead, he proposes a national child support assurance system.

Under the system, originally designed by Irwin Garfinkel of the University of Wisconsin and now being partially tested in Wisconsin, paternity is established at birth for most children. If the father does not marry the mother (or the parents are divorced or legally separated), he is ordered to make child-support payments, with the amount of the payments being determined in accordance with uniform government standards based on a specified percentage of the father's income. (The percentage rises with the number of children for which the father must provide support.) The child-support payments are then automatically deducted from the father's paychecks by his employer and transferred by the government to the mother. The government also sets a minimum child-support assurance level. If the father's payment falls below this level—because his earnings are too low or he is unemployed, sick, or disabled—the government makes up the difference. The mother is thus guaranteed (or "assured") a certain basic level of child support.

Ellwood envisions this system as an addition to the Social Security Act. In the 1930s, he states, the most severe causes of economic insecurity were old age and unemployment. In response, Social Security and unemployment insurance were established. Today, he contends, the greatest course of economic insecurity is single parenthood. Consequently, we need a new universal insurance program, financed in part by contributions from the family (i.e., the child-support payments from the absent father) to reduce this insecurity and protect children growing up in single-parent families against destitution.

A number of the elements of the proposed child-support assurance system, including the use of state standards to set child-support award levels and the mandatory withholding of child-support payments from absent fathers' paychecks, were included in last year's federal welfare reform law and will take effect in the 1990s. Unfortunately, however, establishment of a government-guaranteed minimum child-support payment level is not part of that law; securing the adoption of this critical provision will be far more difficult. Without this feature, the insurance element is missing, and economic insecurity remains a major threat to single-parent families. Ellwood makes a compelling case for adding this element to the child-support system in the future.

The last major piece of Ellwood's schema is directed at poor single-parent and two-parent families in which the parents either do not have jobs or work only part-time and lack enough income from work or child support to escape from poverty. These families would be eligible for some cash assistance, but it would not be welfare as we know it today.

For these families, Ellwood would convert welfare into a less stigmatized system of transitional assistance that provides both cash benefits and "serious" educational and social support for a period of eighteen months to three years. At the conclusion of this period, if the family does not have employment, a family member would be guaranteed a minimum-wage job. (Both full-time and part-time jobs would be made available.) But there would be no ongoing welfare benefit.

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Ellwood emphasizes that this is not a proposal to make recipients "work off" their benefits. Welfare benefits would no longer exist; besides, workfare is not what he has in mind. What would be provided is a regular job, at a substantially increased minimum wage, and with greatly expanded EITC benefits to supplement the wages. Acceptance of the job would generally assure that the family would be raised above the poverty line without any need of welfare if the job were full-time or if the family were also receiving child support.

Yet to this reader, Ellwood fails to make the convincing case for this proposal that he makes for his "make work pay" and child-support assurance ideas. Coupling transitional welfare assistance with a guaranteed job may make sense for two-parent families. In such families, one parent will generally be available to work full-time, and the families would end up considerably better off under the Ellwood proposal than they are today if they remain on public assistance. For single-parent families, however, the proposal seems unnecessarily rigid and harsh. Suppose the mother has several young children. Suppose one of her children is sick or disabled or she has just given birth. Should we still terminate all cash aid after three years and compel her to work? Suppose that, for some reason, the child's father could not be located, no child-support award has been established, and that therefore no minimum child-support assurance payment is being provided. Even if such a mother works half-time, she will still be far below the poverty line without ongoing cash assistance.

The life situations facing those single mothers who tend to remain on welfare for long periods of time are often complex. Simply mandating work and cutting off assistance regardless of the circumstances may cause some of these families to sink.

Fortunately, Ellwood's other recommendations do not hinge on adoption of this one. The proposals to make work pay and establish a child-support assurance system—and even his proposal to replace public assistance for poor two-parent families with transitional assistance and a guaranteed job—can be pursued without converting cash assistance for single-parent families into a time-limited program. True, the welfare system will not then have been fully "replaced." But it will have been much reduced. With substantially greater returns from work and more adequate child support, many of those who are now poor and on welfare will be off the welfare rolls and, more important, out of poverty.

Herein lies a key element of the book's message. In the years ahead, some of the best opportunities to help poor families will be outside the welfare system. The Tax Reform Act of 1986, which provided more benefits to low-income families than any other piece of legislation in more than a decade, was a vivid illustration of this principle. Moreover, the failure of the 1988 welfare reform law to materially improve welfare benefit levels provides further evidence of the difficulty of using the welfare system to make major strides in reducing poverty among low-income families.

At the state level, battles to raise low welfare benefit levels remain as important as ever. However, these are often battles to keep matters from getting worse—to prevent benefits from falling even further behind inflation. The potential for major advances, especially at the federal level, now seems greatest outside the traditional welfare structure.

To those seeking to make these nonwelfare advances, *Poor Support* can function as something of a guide. For this reason, despite its lesser renown, *Poor Support* is likely to have a more lasting impact than Murray's *Losing Ground*. Murray's book led conservative policymakers to a dead end. Not even the Reagan administration dared endorse his proposal to abolish virtually all low-income benefit programs. By contrast, Ellwood's book gives policymakers some new intellectual and strategic handles. I look for some of these handles to be seized by creative legislators and advocates in the years ahead. □

Alice Kessler-Harris

DECONSTRUCTING HISTORY

GENDER AND THE POLITICS OF HISTORY, by Joan Wallach Scott. New York: Columbia University Press, 1988. 242 pp. $29.

One good reason to read this book is that it directly addresses the current right-wing attack on university attempts to modernize their course offerings. As the *New York Times* reported on November 22, 1988, that attack is spearheaded by complaints that "women and members of minority groups had contaminated . . . objectivity on decisions about curriculum, promotions and academic discourse." To combat this spreading disease, Stephen M. Balch, president and executive director of the National Association of Scholars, called for setting up "new educational centers" designed to compete

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with what the *Times* called "ideological programs." This was necessary because, as the *Times* put it, conservatives believe the left has a political agenda "to undermine Western institutions."

Just beneath the surface of these comments lies the unarticulated premise that our institutions rest on a set of unchanging truths. In this conception, governing ideas, like the virtue of individualism or the value of democracy, require daily defense, and the conservative scholar becomes an embattled warrior intent on saving the American soul. As Balch put it, "We are going to redeem American higher education from intellectual and moral servitude to forces having little to do with the life of the mind or the transmission of knowledge." The real battle, then, is over what properly constitutes the life of the mind, and it raises such questions as by whom and how the content of education should be regulated.

These issues form the theoretical and practical backdrop of Joan Scott's *Gender and the Politics of History*. In contrast to conservatives—who begin from unquestioned assumptions about the legitimacy of an existing body of literature—Scott, an eminent historian and professor at the Institute for Advanced Study in Princeton, N.J., challenges us to ask questions about the construction of knowledge and to consider the politics behind it.

Gender occupies a critical place in this politics. Defined by Scott as both "knowledge about" and the "social organization" of sexual difference, it constitutes one of the central arenas in which power is contested. In this volume, it serves as the focus of Scott's attempts to think about the production of knowledge. Yet the enterprise is not merely abstract. For, says Scott, an examination of how "gender is produced, reproduced, and transformed in different situations" is an important part of the current feminist project to change existing distributions of power.

With this project, I confess both sympathy and identity. But there remains still the question of what kind of history can most effectively help us to see the development and operation of sexual difference. For Scott, traditional descriptive history, which relies on the collection and analysis of empirical data, is inadequate. Cogently, she criticizes its tendency to confine discussions of gender to the limited space of such institutions as the family or the trade union, while obscuring the ways in which gender is intrinsic to all social organization. Searching for a way to understand how a society incorporates gendered understandings, she turns to post-structuralist or deconstructive analysis.

Historians, Scott suggests, can discover how meaning is produced through a study of "text"—which includes such things as ritual, celebration, and cultural symbols as well as written and spoken material. The historian's task is to analyze the verbal and nonverbal language of these texts. Occasions, artifacts, the spoken and written word are explored for their meaning rather than to determine their place in a complicated causal chain. The method shifts the historian's perspective from the "why did this happen?" that underlies theories of causation, to the "how should we understand this?" that is crucial to the continuing negotiation of meaning.

Gender and the Politics of History argues passionately for the capacity of this approach to illuminate issues of political and social change. Deconstruction, according to Scott, offers a theory that illuminates the complex processes by which knowledge is produced. Because these processes involve conflict, the historian is led to examine the forces that contest meaning and in which power resides. Following Michel Foucault, Scott holds that power is rooted in dispersed forces, not concentrated in the hands of ruling elites. Politics, Scott argues, "is the process by which plays of power and knowledge constitute identity and experience." By this definition, the core of political analysis and the historian's task of discovering how meaning is constructed and contested form a seamless web.

In a persuasive and eloquent introduction, Scott invites the skeptical historian to follow in her footsteps. To understand how cultural knowledge is transmitted and altered, she suggests, is to understand how social categories such as class and gender, race and ethnicity, are formed. Deconstruction helps to demystify the historical process, calling into question the nature of a "fact," and revealing history itself to be the construction of historical actors, preservers, and researchers. It opens to exploration the historian's role in the creation of the past and the construction of the future, and it thus dissolves the line between political activism and intellectual work. In proposing a relativist picture of historical truth, post-structuralism enables us to cast a skeptical eye on those who make history the servant of a particular politics.

But Scott fails to resolve some questions about the uses of deconstruction for historical analysis. Whatever questions one has about the literary critic's use of deconstructive techniques are multiplied when the historian adopts them. Since the goal of criticism is a deeper understanding of the text, one might argue that any new literary technique is welcome. But for the historian, an understanding of the text, whether written document or social ritual, is not an end in itself. It is a means to an understanding of

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social process. And deconstruction seems peculiarly ill-suited to help with this.

To begin with, it threatens to turn the past into an abstraction in which the choice of text is idiosyncratic, in which the surrounding historical circumstance is utilized to elucidate the meaning of the text rather than to explain historical change, and in which the relative equality of all texts reduces political analysis to a mirage. Because the facts of post-structuralism exist only in relation to the text, the historian, following the literary critic, is led to argue that meaning is and can only be "constructed." This may seem to be simply another way of describing the historian's traditional role as mediator between facts and theories. And yet in this method, the historian's subjective judgment becomes the primary tool of investigation. The use of deconstruction poses troubling questions by placing the historian much closer to the center of the process than has previously been the case.

Equally problematic, deconstruction exposes the discipline to the charge that it is able to say nothing permanent, and therefore nothing of value. It assumes that suppressed meanings or "differences" are embedded in seemingly fixed categories, and attempts to uncover these hidden oppositions. Scott argues that this search for oppositions makes it possible to "study systematically the conflictual processes that produce meanings." Perhaps so. But it cannot account for human intention or motivation, two slippery historical problems that are crucial to understanding the way in which meanings come to be, and which influence how they are accepted and acted upon.

Finally, the historian who uses these techniques has yet to resolve the problem of how to bridge the gap between an analysis of language in one form or another, and activity that leads to change. For all Scott's defense of its capacity to illuminate politics, the technique provides little insight into how social systems are transformed or how the powerless alter their positions.

But these unsolved issues do not vitiate Scott's central point. Deconstruction, in practice, offers a way of reading that allows us to explore new kinds of evidence. Scott insists that the social historian is not confined to a single text, nor to the text alone. Nor, she suggests, need the historian who uses post-structuralist techniques suspend other means of understanding. Rather, the historian's analysis is rooted in the exploration of a variety of meanings that are implicit in a Foucaultian conception of political power at work in many different locations. In the end, then, Scott salvages deconstructive analysis for the historian by backing away from its extreme application. Indeed, while Scott defends her use of deconstruction by arguing for its capacity to expose suppressed meanings, the essays in which she illustrates the technique suggest the eclecticism of her own approach.

Thus, for example, the introduction and the essay entitled "Gender: A Useful Category of Historical Analysis"—perhaps the keystone of the book—each argue inspiringly that exposing the gendered understandings implicit in social thought can alter our conceptions of the past, enriching ideas about such processes as the formation of class. But the essays that illustrate this grand design are more cautious. "Work Identities for Men and Women" explores the conflicting meaning of ideas about femininity and family among nineteenth-century French garment workers but it stops far short of the ambitious possibilities sketched in Scott's introduction. When attempts to "challenge the natural status of seemingly dichotomous pairs" become the focus of discussion, as in the essay entitled "The Sears Case," their limits for historical analysis are quickly apparent. Here Scott dissects arguments about female difference employed by the two historians who served as expert witnesses. As one of those two, I found myself in the peculiar position of watching deconstructionist theory applied to an event I had experienced as highly structured.

Confronted with an argument that emphasized the differences between women and men as a justification for statistical disparities in employment, I argued in court that differences among women with respect to their occupational expectations negated such an argument. Scott poses an alternative. A fully theorized notion of difference, she suggests, would have led me to refuse the dichotomy that Sears proposed. Scott is undoubtedly right to notice the absence of such a fully theorized notion. But she raises a more complex set of questions than she allows. For in dissecting the notion of male-female difference as it emerged in the courtroom debates, Scott neglected the rest of the text. The courtroom itself; the legal rules by which justice was bound and which it could and did bend; the nature of the adversarial system; the persona of the judge; the limits on the capacity of counsel to introduce one argument or another; the skill of the lawyers: all these constitute part of the web of understanding that requires analysis and lead us to ask whether the theoretical attractiveness of Scott's alternative framework is not vitiated by the historical context. The essay reveals the kinds of questions deconstruction can raise, but it also suggests its limits for understanding historical process.

In the end, however, Scott's cautious use of

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deconstructive technique, more than her elaborate claims for it, serves to demystify the historical process, and helps us to see the value of deconstruction more clearly. These essays effectively demonstrate that knowledge is constructed, in part, out of the gendered social identities of individuals. In so far as those social identities are shaped by, and in turn shape the world of politics, we are led to glimpse the crucial importance of understanding how individuals and groups create and construe the world around them. This is an impressive feat, and one for which we can only be grateful. Historians who read *Gender and the Politics of History* may continue to be properly cautious about adopting a post-structuralist framework, but they can no longer avoid thinking about the issues raised by this new theory of knowledge. Nor will they be easily persuaded by the arguments of political groups that believe their construction of the past is the only plausible one, and that their "facts" deserve recognition while others go begging.□

Mark Levinson

SOME TRUTH ABOUT OUR ECONOMY

THE GREAT U-TURN: CORPORATE RESTRUCTURING AND THE POLARIZING OF AMERICA, by Barry Bluestone and Bennett Harrison. New York: Basic Books, 1988. 242 pp. $19.95.

Ronald Reagan's victory in 1980 was in part the result of Jimmy Carter's failure to respond to high unemployment and inflation. Carter's austerity program (in 1979, when millions of people were without work, Carter proposed a $25 billion cut in government spending) looked pale beside Republican promises to restore economic growth, stop inflation without recession, and make everyone better off.

By the early 1980s Republican ideas were a disaster. A tight-money policy resulting in high interest rates plunged the economy into recession. Factories closed, millions of workers lost their jobs, and thriving industrial communities became ghost towns. As Democrats regrouped, some sought an alternative to Republican supply-side economics in industrial policy—an economic program that entailed an expanded role for government in the economy, democratic planning, public investment, and managed trade.

The most important book demonstrating the need for an industrial policy was Barry Bluestone and Bennett Harrison's *The Deindustrialization of America*. According to Bluestone and Harrison, behind the plant closings and the resulting unemployment was the "hypermobility" of capital, which had "been diverted from productive investment in our own basic national industries into unproductive speculation, merger and acquisitions, and foreign investment."

Critics argued that the loss of jobs described by Bluestone and Harrison was simply part of the process of economic development, with employment shifting from agriculture to goods-producing industries and finally to services. For these critics the problem with the U.S. economy was not that private disinvestment in industry was occurring too fast, as Bluestone and Harrison argued, but that it was too slow. If the future of the world economy is in services and high technology, the United States should develop these areas and not worry about deindustrialization. As James Fallows put it:

> There are good reasons to believe that today's economic change is very much like past changes that the United States has undergone—and therefore to conclude that it will create many more opportunities than it destroys. . . . Why should we decide that the whole national history of migration, adjustment, and advancement must now come to an end?

The Great U-Turn is a book-length answer to this question. From the late 1940s to the early 1970s the average American worker's standard of living rose steadily. After 1973 wages fell, inequality started to rise, average family income stopped growing, and after 1979 the number of people living below the poverty level increased.

According to Bluestone and Harrison these u-turns were the result of actions taken first by leaders of American business and then reinforced by government policy. Business was reacting to falling profits, which, after peaking in the mid-1960s, declined for the next fifteen years. In response, corporate leaders:

> abandoned core businesses, invested offshore, shifted capital into overtly speculative ventures, subcontracted work to low wage contractors here and abroad, demanded wage concessions from their employees, and substituted part time and other forms of contingent labor for full time workers—all in the name of "restructuring." Government supported these corporate strategies through deregulation, the engineered recessions of 1980 and 1981–82, cutbacks in social programs, and direct attacks on organized labor.

Profits have rebounded but the costs to American society have been large. As I write the U.S. economy is in the seventy-second month of a rather

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unusual recovery. More people are working than ever before yet society is becoming more polarized.

- Income inequality is at its highest level in over forty years. The upper 20 percent, and especially the top 5 percent, of the population has enjoyed substantial income growth since 1979. Families in the lower 40 percent of the income distribution lost ground.
- In 1987 the average family's income (adjusted for inflation) was about the same as in 1973. However, families were able to maintain their standard of living only by working more hours and by having more members work. Those families that did not have an additional adult in the labor force experienced income losses from 4 percent to 6.5 percent since 1979.
- According to the Economic Policy Institute, since 1979 industries with expanding employment paid annual wages and benefits nearly $9,000 less per employee than those paid in industries with shrinking employment. Bluestone and Harrison argue that, for explaining declining earnings, changes within industries are even more important than shifts between industries. Whatever the cause, average hourly wages, adjusted for inflation, have fallen almost 7 percent since 1979 and 11 percent since 1973.
- Since 1979 people who worked made up the fastest growing group among the poor. In 1979, 6.5 million working people fell below the poverty line. In 1987, after five years of economic recovery, the number of working poor was 8.4 million.
- By 1986 the average family in the United States was saddled with personal debts of more than $11,500, excluding their mortgages. Bluestone and Harrison calculate that the average family was spending one-fifth of its monthly income simply to pay off debt.
- Between 1979 and 1987 all of the progress made during the 1960s in reducing poverty has been reversed. The poor are getting poorer. The average amount by which the incomes of the poor fell below the poverty line was at an all-time high in 1987.
- Labor income—wages, salaries, and fringe benefits—as a share of total personal income fell dramatically between 1979 and 1987, while income from capital—interest, dividends, and rents—increased. The increase in capital income is due largely to the sharp rise in interest rates during the 1980s.

The most controversial claim in *The Great U-Turn* is that since 1979 there has been a proliferation of low-wage jobs. The controversy started in December 1986 when the Joint Economic Committee (JEC) of Congress issued a report by Bluestone and Harrison that claimed three-fifths of net new jobs between 1979 and 1984 paid low wages, compared with one-fifth during the 1963–79 period (low wages were defined as one-half the 1973 real median annual wage).

Such a discomforting picture of the "Reagan recovery" was bound to provoke a reaction. Warren Brooks, a conservative newspaper columnist, called Bluestone and Harrison's analysis a "big lie"; Robert Samuelson, economics correspondent for *Newsweek* and the *Washington Post,* claimed it was a "statistical illusion"; Janet Norwood, commissioner of the Bureau of Labor Statistics, argued that their results did not represent a long-run trend; and in a rigorous critique Beryl Sprinkel, chairman of Reagan's Council of Economic Advisors, stated that he didn't "know of anyone who thinks the argument is correct" (and we can be sure that Mr. Sprinkel knows very intelligent people).

The most serious critics have been Marvin Kosters and Murray Ross of the American Enterprise Institute. In the *Public Interest* (Winter 1988), they claim that the Bluestone and Harrison study is "seriously flawed" and "presents a grossly distorted view of what is happening to work and jobs." According to Kosters and Ross, they reexamined the data and reached "radically different" conclusions:

> The principal conclusion of this analysis . . . is that for workers as a whole, there has been no proliferation of low-wage (or even low-earning) jobs, or any movement of workers in the middle toward lower-earnings status.

The main reason Kosters and Ross arrive at different results is that they use a different measure for inflation. Kosters and Ross argue that the Consumer Price Index used by Bluestone and Harrison overstated inflation in the 1970s and early 1980s because of its treatment of housing costs. The index used by Kosters and Ross shows much less inflation and therefore a lesser fall in wages. Although it is difficult to say which index is the more accurate measure of inflation, it should be noted that the index used by Bluestone and Harrison is used by the Bureau of Labor Statistics and the Census Bureau to show historical trends and that Kosters himself has used it in several studies to measure wage growth.

Kosters and Ross then argue that the distribution of earnings (based on current-year medians) hasn't changed much since 1967. This is true but beside the point. The distribution of earnings doesn't indicate anything about the level of earnings. For example, every worker's earnings could decline by 50 percent

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and yet there would be no change in the distribution of earnings. To examine whether there has been a shift to low- or high-paying jobs, one must do what Bluestone and Harrison have done—which is to look at changes in average earnings as well as changes in the distribution of earnings.

Kosters and Ross also fault Bluestone and Harrison for failing, in their JEC study, to take account of the fact that part-year and part-time workers—whose numbers have been growing—tend to drag down average earnings. Kosters and Ross argue that the best way to understand trends in the quality of jobs is to focus on year-round, full-time workers.

> Workers with low earnings should not be identified with jobs that pay low wages. . . . Earnings of a year-round-full-time worker is a measure that is significantly closer to a wage rate concept than earnings of all workers, because part-year and part-time workers are excluded from this earnings measure.

In *The Great U-Turn* Bluestone and Harrison follow Kosters and Ross's advice and restrict their analysis of new jobs to year-round, full-time workers. The results still show a dramatic decline in the quality of jobs. (See chart.) In fact, a careful

Percentage of Net Growth of Jobs

Year-Round, Full-Time Workers (1986 Dollars)	1963–73	1973–79	1979–86
Low Stratum			
less than $11,104	−9.8	19.2	36
Middle Stratum			
$11,104–44,412	87.6	74.6	50.1
High Stratum			
above $44,412	22.2	6.2	13.9

reader of the Kosters and Ross article will find similar figures. But Kosters and Ross ignore these numbers in their conclusion.

New figures from Bluestone and Harrison demonstrate that the situation is even worse. Adding part-time jobs to the above table, controlling for hours worked, and updating the figures to 1987 show that 57 percent of net new jobs since 1979 pay wages that on a year-round, full-time basis are below the poverty level for a family of four.

Bluestone and Harrison's evidence on declining job quality has not been refuted. However, the causes of this decline are not adequately discussed in *The Great U-Turn*. In the few pages Bluestone and Harrison devote to this, they cite evidence contradicting the theory that it was the baby boom that bid down wages and swelled the ranks of low-paid workers. Another widely held notion—that the decline in job quality is simply due to declining productivity—is also not an adequate explanation. Larry Mishel of the Economic Policy Institute has pointed out that productivity growth was greater from 1979 to 1986 than it was from 1973 to 1979, yet there was a greater deterioration of job quality after 1979. According to Bluestone and Harrison the more likely causes are a combination of deindustrialization, sluggish productivity growth, and the globalization of production. This is probably correct, but it doesn't go far enough in explaining the relative importance of each factor. After such a thorough documentation of declining job quality we are left without an adequate understanding of what caused it.

This shortcoming weighs little against the achievement of *The Great U-Turn*. Bluestone and Harrison have not, as too often happens today, retreated into the academicism of theoretical economists (including many Marxists) who spin models divorced from any economy (the Marxist models, we are assured, are very "radical"). They have done something much more important: they have presented information that makes celebrations of the great American job machine appear as willful attempts to ignore stubborn facts.

"My own country learns nothing except by dreadful experience." Keynes's lament about Britain in 1940 seems equally true of the United States today. However, *The Great U-Turn*, by detailing how dreadful the experience has become and in helping us understand why, will assist those committed to exploring alternatives. □

Anthony D. Smith

MYTHS OF ELECTION

GOD LAND: REFLECTIONS ON RELIGION AND NATIONALISM, by Conor Cruise O'Brien. Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 1988. 97 pp. $15.95.

We have long been accustomed to think of nationalism as a secular creed, opposed to earlier religious faiths. Our image of nationalism is shaped by the French Revolution, that first great eruption of patriotic forces that reverberated throughout Europe and then the world. Recently, however, the Islamic revival, the reign of the ayatollahs, and ethnic conflicts in Ireland, Poland, Armenia, the Punjab, and Sri Lanka, among others, have forced us to

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revise our ideas about the relationship of nationalism to religion.

This is the theme of Conor Cruise O'Brien's book. Rather than opposition, he sees the conflation of religion and nationalism in the concept of "election." Indeed, this is the source of all the dangers posed by nationalism today. For nationalism as doctrine must be distinguished from nationalism "as a collective emotional force." The former is relatively weak compared to communism; the latter is the kind that is so powerful and explosive. The former is just two centuries old; the latter goes back to the Old Testament. It is there that we find the conflation of nationalism with religion: in God's promises and choice of a particular people and a particular land. Christianity tried to allegorize the myth of terrestrial election away, but its earthiness gradually returned with the Nicene Creed as the official cult of the Roman empire. Virgil's *Aeneid,* the Islamic menace, and the holy wars of the Crusades helped to despiritualize Christendom and attach a holy nationalism to the emergent states of Western Europe. By the time of Joan of Arc, many people had come to believe in the concept of France and the French people arising out of the union of the sacred king with the holy country.

The idea of the chosen people was not confined to France. Renaissance Germany, Puritan England, and New England provided favorable soil for the zeal of holy nationalism as the Old Testament began to be reread in its literal sense. The link with ancient Israel and its liberation from Egyptian bondage was made explicit, and later immigrants to America soon transferred their own holy nationalisms to their adopted country. In our century, holy nationalism in America has fused anticommunism with the national religion, as Cardinal Spellman, Joseph McCarthy, the National Prayer Breakfast, and the Air and Space Museum so eloquently testify.

Even the French Enlightenment and Revolution were permeated by Puritan holy nationalism. Spinoza, Rousseau, and Herder, the three Enlightenment prophets of nationalism, were steeped in the Judaic-Puritan myth of election. Similarly, the Jansenists, in securing the expulsion of the Jesuits from France in the 1760s, struck a vital blow against monarchy and for Gallican nationalism. Robespierre, Siéyès, Michelet, hastened to replace God by the Nation of Frenchmen; Fichte to politicize Herder's cultural nationalism. And the Revolution in America was saturated with holy Protestant nationalism directed against Roman Catholicism as well as British toleration of popery.

It is this fanatical religiosity that Cruise O'Brien finds so dangerous and distasteful. He readily concedes that even today society requires a bonding principle that inspires reverence; holy nationalism serves this function particularly effectively. Without it, societies might well fall apart. But he prefers Roger Williams's antinationalism, while conceding that the United States is more the creation of its Puritan holy nationalists. So his attitude to nationalism is "Respect, but suspect." In his words: "To use an old analogy: the stuff is like fire; you need it to warm you, but it can destroy you if it gets out of control." If being a "chosen" nation tempers arrogance with fear and anxiety, because God can exchange one chosen people for another, being a "holy" nation, i.e., chosen with tenure, though still under God, paves the way for the third and most dangerous form of religious nationalism, the nation idolizing itself, with no entity, law, or ethic above the "deified" nation. That was the nationalism of the Third Reich.

There is much to commend in Cruise O'Brien's analysis, not least its erudition and wit. He is right to emphasize the close links between religion and nationalism and the messianic fervor in much of today's national sentiment. He is also right to distinguish the doctrine of nationa*lism* from the emotional state, though, to avoid confusion, I would prefer to call the latter "national sentiment." I would also concur in many of his attitudes toward the more extreme manifestations of past and contemporary nationalisms.

Yet I have to confess to considerable unease over the framework and direction of his argument. To begin with, I do not think it helps to bracket ancient collective loyalties with modern national sentiments under a single heading. They are related but by no means identical. There is a world of difference between the *ethnic* loyalties of the ancient and early medieval worlds, including the Old Testament, and the *nationalist* ideals and aspirations of the modern world. The former are centered on myths of descent, historical memories, religious culture; the latter much more on economic unity and resources, legal rights and citizenship, a civil ideology, and common education. Admittedly, territory links the two. But today, "homeland" is not always "Godland," and often not in the specific sense of a moral-territorial covenant such as we find in the Hebrew Bible. Today, the homeland is linked to a state and culture, to form the "nation-state." Before the fourteenth century such connections were rarely made, and borders were porous and ill-defined.

In other words, the link between nationalism and religion is often less direct than Cruise O'Brien suggests. Nationa*lism*, the ideology, is not as weak as he claims exactly because it has managed to

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attach itself to preexisting ethnic sentiments that proved durable over several centuries. These ethnic sentiments, in turn, were often kept alive by priests and scribes and linked to communal forms of religion, which elevated the people in question.

Against much modern scholarship, Cruise O'Brien is right to emphasize elements of continuity between premodern eras of ethnic community and the modern era of nations, between ethnocentrism and nationalism. But there are also important differences that a book based on a short series of lectures can hardly be expected to encompass. Continuity was broken in many cases, or the "ethnic character" changed, especially with immigration or the adoption of a new religion (for example, when Persia was Islamicized, or Greeks became Orthodox Christians). A short overview that dwells on the highlights minimizes these changes.

The same brevity also means that the "religious" component of modern American, Soviet, and Third World nationalisms is highlighted at the expense of other symbolic and cultural elements. The "holy nationalisms" of "Marxist" Somalia and Ethiopia are predicated on long histories of ethnic (and imperial) solidarity, with all the attendant myths, symbols, traditions, and memories that give meaning and direction to "Ethiopia" and "Somalia." The myth of election is product, and cause, of ethnoreligious conflicts in the Middle Ages. But it is also fed by modern ideas of secular territorial nationalism, whose proponents, usually the intelligentsia, adapt its ideals to ethnic realities, using the Marxist-Leninist party-state to incorporate and mobilize the chosen population. This messianic secular component needs also to be stressed and its ethnic underpinnings further explored.

Can we live without holy nationalisms? If Durkheim is to be believed, all societies (not just the Third Reich) idolize themselves, and must do so to survive. We are all "deified" nations, by that token. The evidence suggests this remains true for many "nation-states," even today; and it undoubtedly intensifies interstate conflicts in many regions. But, as Cruise O'Brien suggests, national identity and solidarity may be tempered by regional and global forces—technological, economic, cultural—that evoke wider communities. Unfortunately, these same forces may accentuate the inequalities between nations, fueling the sense of chosenness and demanding a reversal of disprivileged status. Even class conflicts within nations can fuel messianic national aspirations, as one class outbids its antagonists ("proletarian" nations are just as messianic).

As Cruise O'Brien remarks on his penultimate page, the real obstacle to international management is one of understanding: "*Any* nationalism inherently finds it hard to understand any other nationalism or even to want to understand it. This is particularly true of holy nationalisms. Rejection of the other is part of the holiness."

As a description of premodern ethnocentrism, this is admirable. But, although it suggests the magnitude of the contemporary problem, it overlooks the complexity of a situation in which, while rejecting the other, several nationalisms have selectively (but quite extensively) borrowed from the "other" (for example, Japan, Turkey, Israel, India). Today's nationalism is often also polycentric, seeking to make an individual contribution to an accepted wider civilization. Perhaps here, and in historical understanding of the other, lies our hope of national coexistence. That in turn requires an advance in "civilization" to recognize and accommodate the individuality and contribution of each of its national components. For there is little doubt that for the foreseeable future, nation-states (so-called) will remain the building blocks of any wider regional communities and civilizations. Conor Cruise O'Brien's brief survey has provided us with a perceptive introduction to a relatively neglected, but crucial, aspect of contemporary politics, but it is an area that demands much deeper investigation than could be attempted in a few lectures. □

Ira Berlin

RECONSTRUCTION RECONSIDERED

RECONSTRUCTION: AMERICA'S UNFINISHED REVOLUTION, *1863–1877*, by Eric Foner. New York: Harper and Row, 1988. 690 pp. $29.95.

Few periods of U.S. history have generated more debate than the Civil War era and its aftermath, what Eric Foner calls "America's Unfinished Revolution." And few periods have been subject to more intense investigation. The last two decades have seen the publication of numerous studies of the Reconstruction era, many of them models of the new history in their desire to give all participants—former slaves as well as former masters—a full hearing. They add to an already formidable literature, which has focused on the epic struggle between Abraham Lincoln, then on Andrew Johnson and the congressional Radicals in Washington and finally on carpetbaggers, scalawags, newly enfranchised blacks, and unreconstructed rebels in the

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South. These works themselves rest upon a monographic mountain of biographies, state and local histories, and institutional analyses. A historian could spend a good part of his or her scholarly life mastering the literature on Reconstruction in a single state.

To complicate matters further, multiple variations of each of these genres exist. The tortured path of racial ideology in the United States—the waning of wartime egalitarianism, the revival of the Lost Cause, the growth of segregation, and the triumph of the civil rights movement—has inspired waves of revisionism, so much so that the "revisionist" Reconstruction historians have themselves been revised several times. As the history of Reconstruction has been retold, heroes have become villains and villains restored to grace. The period has gone from being a heroic era to a tragic one and back again, with the sources and meaning of tragedy redefined with each turn of the ideological screw. Americans who smirk at the rewriting of Soviet schoolbooks would find rereading the "Reconstruction" section of their own high school texts a sobering experience.

The great strength of Eric Foner's *Reconstruction: America's Unfinished Revolution* is that it addresses the period as a whole. Foner, a professor of history at Columbia University, does this by drawing together the scholarship of the last twenty years and by adding his own views, informed by a close reading of thousands of letters, speeches, pamphlets, and tens of thousands of pages of newsprint. He gives coherence to the various fragments of the Reconstruction puzzle: the social transformation of slaves into a free people; the contest between the president and Congress; the factional battles within Congress and the various state legislatures; the remaking of the American economy; and the extraordinary violence and corruption of the era.

Synthesis is not merely consolidation. What emerges from Foner's *Reconstruction* is not simply the same story on a larger screen or a recasting of heroes and villains. Instead, Foner presents a new way of thinking about the period. Central to Foner's vision is the struggle over the control of labor in an emerging capitalist order—a debate over the very meaning of "free labor."

The death of slavery forced the American people to confront the issue of labor. First and foremost slavery had meant work, the forcible extraction of one person's labor for the benefit of another. The inability to control one's own labor reduced such a person to dependency. By definition, such people could not enjoy an independent family, religious, or political life, and they lacked the means to better themselves. These rights—freedom of church, school, politics, and family, together with the right to self-improvement—stood at the heart of the American idea of liberty in the middle of the nineteenth century. It was precisely the absence of such rights that made slavery objectionable to white northerners, even those who carried no brief for racial equality.

For many Americans, however, freedom did not stop with the right to control one's own labor. From their perspective, to work for wages was to be less than free. Lincoln himself appeared to have embraced this notion and made much of it in his celebration of the ability of poor men—like himself—to gain, over the course of their lives, an independent, property-based livelihood. But even as Lincoln articulated the ideal of an independent, propertied citizenry, such a citizenry was being replaced by one that worked only for wages and had no access to productive property.

The liberation of some four million slaves and the identification of emancipation with the sanctity of the nation-state—the Union forever—placed the debate over the meaning of freedom at the center of American politics. Would the newly freed slaves be wage workers or proprietors? The fact that slaves believed that their freedom had to be predicated on access to some independent source of wealth—usually, but not always, land—fused the question of labor with the question of American nationality, even after it became clear that there would be no forty acres and a mule. Americans, white as well as black, came to realize that in deciding the slaves' future, they were shaping their own destiny. For if slavery's demise instantly made slaves into employees and masters into employers, before long the same process would similarly transform yeomen farmers and artisans, crossroad storekeepers, and even substantial merchants and manufacturers.

Foner's perspective gives the very period of Reconstruction a new shape. *Reconstruction* begins not with the war's end, but with emancipation, January 1, 1863. Indeed, from his own premises, Foner would have done better to start even earlier, for the beginning of the Civil War marked the beginning of the end of chattel bondage. Foner also expands the geography of Reconstruction. For him, Reconstruction is not a southern question, and he does not confine his analysis to the South, although he rightly identifies the former Confederacy as the cockpit of the struggle. Indeed, in many ways, the debate over the meaning of free labor in the North was as important as that in the South, and one wishes that Foner had taken his own good advice

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and given as much space to events in Pennsylvania and Ohio as to those in Alabama and Mississippi.

By seeing emancipation both as a product and an intensification of the struggle over labor, Foner is able to integrate the disparate elements of the post-emancipation years. Unlike any previous study, *Reconstruction* finds a common ground to join questions as diverse as the reconstitution of the Afro-American family, the reshaping of the nation-state, and the struggle for women's rights with the traditional issues of Reconstruction history—banks, tariffs, corporate subsidies, and political equality. Understanding Reconstruction as a revolutionary alteration of social relations also explains the extraordinary opposition it called forth. The counter-revolutionary terror that came to characterize political life in the former Confederate states itself testified to the radical changes that emancipation had set in motion.

Foner's understanding of Reconstruction as a struggle over labor will doubtless jar those who have come to think of the period in terms of the question of race—the struggle between the forces of white supremacy and racial equality. *Reconstruction* in no way diminishes the importance of racial identification as a force of social cohesion or opposition; the former slaves, after all, were not simply workers, they were black workers. But one of Foner's major contributions is the treatment of race as a social construction that changes as the terrain of the political debate shifts. For Foner, race was part of the evolving historical landscape, not just a question or problem that white politicians debated.

From this perspective, black people were the dynamic element in the drama of Reconstruction. It was the ability of former slaves to articulate their own understanding of freedom that gives the era its meaning. In Foner's view, Afro-American history becomes not simply another side car of American life, but its main engine. Those who denigrate the attempt to create a more inclusive, hence more democratic, history might read *Reconstruction* to see how the addition of a new protagonist does not simply enlarge historical understanding but transforms it. Foner's interpretation also puts into perspective the recent debate about the differences between so-called social history, which emphasizes matters of "culture," and political history, which addresses questions of "power," by demonstrating that culture and power are inseparable. The struggle over the reconstitution of the Afro-American family and the remaking of the Afro-American church were as much questions of power as the struggle for land and the ballot.

The years between 1863 and 1877 saw a radical alteration of the relationship between capital and labor. As it changed, so did American society. No aspect of American life was unaffected. The nation-state itself—greatly enlarged by the war and the process of supervising the peace—was transformed, clearing the way for the elevation of the United States to the status of a world power. The nation's economy was reworked through an overhaul of its institutional infrastructure—banks, corporations, transportation, and communication—and an expansion of its superstructure, paving the way for the growth of industrial capitalism. The balance of power within the United States shifted, opening the way for a century of northern dominance. And the people—they too were different. No longer divided between free and slave, Americans were free workers all. But if everyone was free, the meaning of freedom had been altered. Thereafter those who believed access to an independent livelihood should be part of citizenship would be fighting a rearguard action. The revolution wrought by emancipation was unfinished, at least for some. □

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In Memoriam

JOSEPH CLARK
1912–1988

You might say that my first encounter with Joe Clark was not entirely friendly. He was speaking at a Communist rally in the Bronx, and several young Socialists, I among them, went with the intention of heckling. We tried, but had to admit we had met a skillful opponent. In those days Joe was pure flame, quick, fierce, with the self-assurance of someone who had a system explaining nature and man. So we retreated, grudgingly.

My next encounter was at City College, where, by 1939, I was part of a Trotskyist student group that was pecking away at the far larger Young Communist League—that is, we won over a few of its members. Dismayed, the YCL sent Joe down to hold the line. How we chortled at this sign of our dialectical powers—but alas Joe did hold the line, and in the war of the alcoves, we could claim at best a draw.

Many years passed until we met again. Manny Geltman told me, in 1956 or 1957, that Joe, his childhood friend, with whom he had not spoken for years, had haltingly approached for political conversations. The two of them met a number of times, renewing friendship, testing ideas. Joe had already broken from the CP, but these deep changes of conviction can be heart-wrenching, and it takes a long time before your words catch up with your feelings and thoughts. Joe began to approach the *Dissent* group, somewhat nervously—as you might expect, for we were old antagonists. Soon, however, he had made a complete break and declared himself a social democrat or a liberal socialist. The key word here was liberal, that word which in the past Marxists had held in such extravagant contempt. It meant to open one's mind, to be receptive to other opinions, to accept a pluralism of voices. We, from our past, were trying to do that, and Joe soon found himself in harmony with our effort.

One of the notable early pieces Joe wrote for us was, in 1967, a "Letter to My Son," praising much of the militancy of the young but pleading for an unqualified acceptance of democratic values and against ideological fanaticism. They (the young) should make their own mistakes, not repeat mine—this was Joe's theme. I don't know how his son responded to Joe's article, probably not with unqualified enthusiasm, but these things have a way of lodging in one's mind, becoming part of one's consciousness almost unawares.

At first, whenever Joe wrote for us, he insisted that he be identified as the former foreign editor of the *Daily Worker*. Honor required that he not deny his past. That seemed right—until a point was reached when we felt that enough was quite enough; he had suffered during his change of mind; he had behaved with candor and honesty. So—I recall this as if it were yesterday—I approached Joe and said, "No more ex-foreign editor; from now on you're a writer for *Dissent* like all other writers." A big smile broke out across his face, a journey had been completed.

The Joe Clark who was our friend and colleague this past quarter century was a man who kept a good share of his old radical passions, his feelings of outrage whenever he encountered injustice. But at the same time there blossomed in him a lovely humor, a lovely spirit of tolerance, an easy comradeship with those he might not always agree with. Joe had a booming voice, and when he spoke at our board meetings I would sometimes close my eyes and suppose I was hearing the young Joe again—but no, I was wrong, the words, the melody were different. Joe would argue and then break into a delighted laugh, as if he knew, as we were all learning to know, that truth was no one's sole possession and that it is only through exchange, if even then, that we can test our convictions.

We valued him and loved him. Did he know how much? Perhaps not, since we came from a generation where the men found personal conversa-

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tion difficult. We found him, both morally and aesthetically, wonderfully different from the sort of ex-Communist who burns with bitterness, who hurls himself from one extreme to another, who retains the bad habits of his youth in the hard persuasions of age. Now, in the most humane sense, Joe was a liberal man. We all knew how deeply Joe and Ruth suffered in recent years, and there wasn't always something to be said by way of solace. We admired their courage and dignity; we were proud to think of them as our friends.

Somewhere Ignazio Silone has said that the fundamental act of life is one's choice of comrades. In middle age, Joe made a choice, and we who were his comrades these past twenty-five years knew that here we had found that rarity, a good and true human being.

IRVING HOWE □

ROBERT LEKACHMAN
1920–1989

I admired Bob Lekachman long before I met him. It was not only that we shared a political perspective, an interest in the history of economic thought, and a belief that economics is too important to be left to the academic specialist. More significant for me, Bob represented the idea of the economist as public intellectual—one conversant with specialists but whose writings addressed a larger public.

I met Bob through *Dissent*—in fact, I saw him almost only at *Dissent* meetings and occasional conferences. He once told me that as a young man he aspired to a career as a writer. Fearful that he would not be able to support himself, and convinced that the coming socialist revolution would result in a demand for economic planners, he took up economics. He was, he said with a wry smile, correct about his fear of earning a living as a writer, but well ahead of his time in estimating the need for economic planners.

Bob deplored the deterioration of economics from the grand vision of nineteenth-century political economy to its present state as a branch of applied mathematics. He regretted the lack of historical sense among most economists. It wouldn't matter so much, he used to say, if it weren't for the fact that when respectable economists are wrong, other people usually suffer the consequences. Bob was an "outsider" in the economics profession, able to write enough technical articles for tenure, which allowed him, as he said, "to revert to my natural polemical mode."

For over twenty years, writing in his polemical mode, he contributed political and economic commentary to *Dissent*. Whether puncturing the "scientific" posture of the economic establishment, deflating Nixon's pretensions, savaging Gerald Ford's anti-inflation policy (remember WIN buttons?), deriding the timid liberalism of Jimmy Carter or destroying the exaggerated claims of supply-side theorists, Bob's writing was infused with moral vision, a sense of history, and concern for the less fortunate.

In recent years, despite struggling with cancer, Bob continued to write and speak. A year-and-a-half ago I saw him speak to three hundred rank-and-file autoworkers at the UAW education center at Black Lake, Michigan. Walking to the podium he appeared frail. Yet within minutes—his humor communicating an outrage at Reaganite policy that the audience responded to—he had won over the crowd. Here was an economist (there aren't many of them) these workers felt comfortable with.

Bob embodied the ethic that has made it possible for *Dissent*—with a small staff and little money—to exist. He was always available, on call, willing to do what had to be done. Bob Lekachman's lucidity, his humor, his steady work, survive as examples to emulate.

MARK LEVINSON □

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Public Intellectuals

Editors:

Many younger writers and reviewers—my contemporaries—have not liked *The Last Intellectuals*. In my analysis of disappearing public intellectuals, they charge, I avoid the brilliant exceptions that demolish my argument: themselves (or their friends, spouses, or favorite periodical). They are the suns that light up the darkening American landscape. The first review by Walter Kendrick in the *Village Voice Literary Supplement* inaugurated a veritable storm of self-promoters. Professor Kendrick informed the world "there's plenty of intellectual activity going on in America now; the very existence of the *VLS* (a public intellectual journal) proves that the situation isn't quite so bleak as Jacoby maintains." This from the senior editor of the *VLS*.

Kendrickism assumes numerous guises and advances various lists, but in all its forms, it surrenders the real issue; the point is not the brilliance of some companions, which I willingly concede; rather it is the state of a generation, surely something more than a few individuals.

Paul Berman, who eschews sects, is an orthodox Kendrickist. I am an unreliable cultural guide because I failed to consider the *New Republic*, "a very influential magazine" for which Berman writes. "Inconveniently" for my argument, it is "written and edited" largely by younger writers, who are hardly missing but "visibly prolific." "If Jacoby doesn't see this, how can we take his denunciations seriously?" Sorry, I don't see it. Whom is he referring to, aside from himself? I have a grudging respect for some *New Republic* contributors, but the list is short. Very short. Nor is this really germane; Berman cannot accept that some talented hard-working younger writers or several *New Republic* souls do not constitute an intellectual generation. If he is seeing things, how can we take Berman's review seriously?

In no time Berman, now Captain in the *New Republic* Coast Guard, radios that *The Last Intellectuals* is taking on water. Berman's patented and much-feared totalitarian detector starts whirling; he discovers an admiration for what he calls "the Fidelista writers," well-known and unnameable no-goodniks; moreover I "actually praise" C. Wright Mills's "apology" for the "Cuban dictatorship," meaning I mention Mills's 1960 *Listen, Yankee!* without damning it and the Cuban revolution. The prospects are poor; the boat is listing badly. I don't even take up "anything so relevant as dictatorship versus liberty," a famous issue I avoid because—oh no! Berman has seen through me!—I'm for dictatorship. If you "factor in" the admiration for Gore Vidal and "the empty spot where the *New Republic* should be," my book "sinks with a fearsome glub." End of review and issues.

Not quite. I am grateful that Berman begins again. On further consideration, I asked "the pertinent question" and offer answers that seem astonishingly true. He begins by indicting me for "hyperbology"; now he decides that my remarks about the university are "modest," my thoughts about bohemia and free-lance intellectuals "not foolish." The book is "brave," perhaps "historic."

Unfortunately I get things backward. Berman is allergic not simply to Marxism but to materialism. I survey the changing shape of cities and suburbias, the conditions for independent writers, and the fattened universities of the sixties to explain how a younger intellectual generation shifted to campuses. This is too crude, too determinist. Berman blathers about Marxism. He prefers to look at "the history of ideas in the sixties."

He offers some explanations, but Captain Berman himself is lost at sea. I'm too determinist, so he "reverses" my question, which now reads, "Why didn't the older generation produce heirs?" (Was it Spock?) This might be called blaming the parents, which is not exactly free of materialism or determinism. Then Berman pilots around poststructuralism and deconstructionism. These metaphysics addled the brains of young intellectuals, who came to love obscurity and glitter. Berman throws in Finkielkraut, and Bloom's fears about relativism gutting judgments, and old-style intellectuals. Yet what does Berman's exercise in "the history of ideas" have to do with missing public intellectuals? Are postmodernists less public intellectuals than traditional moralists? And if deconstructionism beclouds young minds, can this really be fathomed without considering material circumstances, the university setting where it flourishes?

Berman ends his discourse on postmodernist academicism portentously: "Finally the whole enterprise caved in, and above the rubble hovered the dust of pretension that always hovers when earnest Americans try to imitate the French or the Germans." Is this the same reviewer who began decrying hyperbole? No bombast, he announced, no intellectual crises. A few pages later Berman declaims about intellectual rubble and pretentious dust.

In place of a review Berman offers a grievance decked with the intrepid forays against totalitarianism and Fidelista writers we have come to expect from him. The Captain judges my boat unseaworthy and promptly loses his compass. Some of Berman's points about postmodern academic thought are worthwhile, but they barely address the issues. His attempt at comic relief is not much better. Pondering why I or my friends cannot identify many

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younger public intellectuals, Berman allows himself a very tired joke: It is because we live in California. This witticism hardly falls flat: there is no place to fall from. Yet I don't want to close on a sour note. No matter our differences, Berman exemplifies that endangered species, the non-academic intellectual, to which my book pays homage.

RUSSELL JACOBY
Venice, Calif.

PAUL BERMAN Replies:

In my essay "Intellectuals After the Revolution" I made the error of fundamentally agreeing with Russell Jacoby's basic contention. Imagine his letter if I hadn't! The influence of academies on younger intellectuals and the consequent setback to the younger generation are issues that several of us have been flogging for years and will continue to flog; and since nobody has flogged more lustily than Captain Jacoby, I applaud him. Or I would applaud, if I weren't running for cover.

I deeply, deeply repent my animadversion on tens of millions of Californians. I don't know what got into me. But I do think that a criticism of the younger intellectuals would profit from a reliable description of such intellectual life as exists. On this issue I stand with Walter Kendrick, my colleague at the weekly paper with which I am more accurately identified, the *Village Voice*. Taxing him and me and the other critics of Jacoby's book with being "self-promoters" is a good way to respond to our criticisms. But is it the best way? The *New Republic* came up in my essay because that magazine is thought by many people to have won, for better and for worse, an influence surpassing that of *Telos*, which to be sure has merits of its own.

Jacoby needles me on the issue of dictatorship versus liberty. I have never said that he favors dictatorship. The question of dictatorship and liberty appeared only fleetingly in my essay, and might seem to merit even less attention than that, except that Jacoby underlines radicalism as a prime duty of the intellectuals. Therefore it's natural to wonder what he means by radicalism. He invokes Mills on Cuba as a model for the younger intellectuals. Didn't Mills mislead radical democrats about the libertarian possibilities to be found in repressive dictatorships? God save us from more intellectual models like *Listen, Yankee!*

But listen, Jacoby, we could do worse than having more conversation-starters like your *Last Intellectuals*—exasperating as it is. All those compliments that you quote from my article are sincere. □

Canon I

Editors:

A tardy, brief response to the articles in your Fall 1988 issue about what we should be teaching in the university. A few years ago, having read an article by Barbara Herrnstein Smith in which the virtues of "opening up the canon" were rehearsed, I decided to ask a class of mine at Amherst College, mainly composed of English majors, what they thought about this idea. To a man and woman they thought it was a fine idea. I then threw out the names of various well-known members of the present canon: Marvell's "Horatian Ode," Keats's "Ode to a Nightingale," Samuel Johnson, John Henry Newman, Bernard Shaw—I can't remember exactly which examples I brought up. What became clear, though, was that not just the majority but virtually this whole class of intelligent Amherst College students had absolutely no sense of or acquaintance with the unopened-up canon. And it became clear to me (although not, I must admit, right there on the spot) in these days of film and gender studies, literary theory and pluralistic approaches to "the text"—that teaching the canon might be a rather surprising, even adventurous thing to do. I have been engaged in it ever since, and unless I'm mistaken neither I nor the students are bored.

WILLIAM H. PRICHARD
Henry Clay Folger
Prof. of English
Amherst, Mass.

Canon II

Editors:

In their articles on what should be taught (Fall 1988) Irving Howe and David Bromwich seem to add to the misinformation that has been circulating about the current challenges to the literary canon in the academic humanities. I have a few responses to Howe's essay.

Howe disputes my statement, as quoted by James Atlas, that there has never been a consensus on what the great books are. He's right: There *was* a relative consensus on the canon in nineteenth- and early twentieth-century colleges. It's not difficult to get a consensus if you start by excluding 98 percent of the population from your institution. As late as the 1930s it was still common doctrine in English departments that Jews were incapable of genuine appreciation of English literature. That the same went for blacks, other immigrants, and women wasn't even worth pointing out. If you look at the way appeals to nationalism, racial pride, and Anglo-Saxon superiority figure in the early justifications for establishing "English" as a department, you see an example of how ideological and literary considerations can be hard to separate. It has been pointed out that the courses in Western Civilization whose status above politics is now proclaimed with such fervor by the right originated as propaganda courses in "War Issues" during World War I—attempts to shore up the unity of the West against Bolsheviks and other aliens.

It doesn't seem unreasonable to think that such ideological considerations have affected past and present judgments of what books are worth reading and being taught, though not necessarily in any simple way. The question is at least worth seriously debating. But it can't be debated if we act as if merely to raise it is an affront to the values of civilization.

I would have expected Howe to agree with all this, because he was among those who championed the

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modernist literary taste that radically altered the academic canon after World War II and prepared the ground for the current challenges. The derision Howe now directs at critics who would teach writers like Aphra Behn and Susan Warner is oddly reminiscent of the kind that was directed at the first attempts to introduce Joyce and Faulkner into the literature syllabus.

But Howe now says that questions of race, gender, and class are "better dealt with in courses in history and sociology," not literature. So much for decades of work on the politics of culture, including work that Howe himself has made important contributions to. Again, it seems strange that a critic who has done much to explode academic compartmentalizations and sensitize us to the relations between politics and literature now warns us not to venture outside our fields.

Howe characterizes his targets as a group that wants "to disintegrate or at least damage the very idea of a classic and to replace it with a hodge-podge of currently fashionable items." This description poorly represents the complex, internally conflicted body of scholarship, analysis, and argument that underlies current critiques of the canon. I suspect Howe is confusing recent poststructuralism with the crude political aesthetics of the sixties. His description seems to be recycled from a 1971 essay where he attacked the counterculture in identical terms ("Literary Criticism and Literary Radicals," *American Scholar* [Winter 1971–72]). There is a connection between the aesthetics of the eighties and the sixties, but the one can't be reduced to the other.

What is at issue, finally, is not just a matter of fairness to certain critics but a conflict between different ways of thinking about the democratization of culture. Howe says that "a deeply objectionable aspect of class societies is that they deprive large segments of the population of proper access" to the high culture of the past. The point of education for him, then, should be to restore this stolen heritage to the classes that have been deprived of it. This view is certainly worthy of respect—it echoes Trotsky's forceful response to the Proletkult attack on bourgeois culture in the Soviet cultural debates of the twenties. But it is not the only possible view, or the only one that commands respect.

There is another view that reminds us that while the classes Howe mentions were being deprived of access to high culture, they did not sit back and lament their deprivation but created their own forms of culture. It is in the name of these neglected forms of culture that the established canon is being challenged. If the debate is to get beyond the name-calling stage, this challenge has to be taken seriously.

GERALD GRAFF
Boston, Mass.

IRVING HOWE Replies:

I wish to thank the several correspondents who troubled to refute me on "canon bashing." We will print more letters on this in the next issue. Although quite unconvinced by their arguments, I shall let them have the last word for the moment, with the hope of returning more fully to this theme in the future. □

CORRECTION

The letter to which Alan Howard replied in the Winter 1989 issue was written by Ronald Radosh.

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